■ INQUIRER INVESTIGATIVE

Peace talks with MILF: May pag-asa ba?

Ngayong alas-8 ng gabi, sa ABC

■ Business / B1

Big hike in diesel prices seen next week

■ Entertainment / A26

Edu: I did not point a gun at anyone

■Across / A15

Gunmen open fire on radioman's house

■Metro / A17

Metro mayors say no to IRA reduction

■Sports / A19

Paragua adds Ukraine crown to GM result

PNP to print posters of top 20 most wanted men

By Christian V. Esguerra

ONE HAS been on the run for 18 years after allegedly gunning down an opponent of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Another has been linked to alleged efforts to destabilize President Macapagal-Arroyo's administration.

PNP/ A6

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Guess who OKd bulldozing of 10,000 young trees in QC?

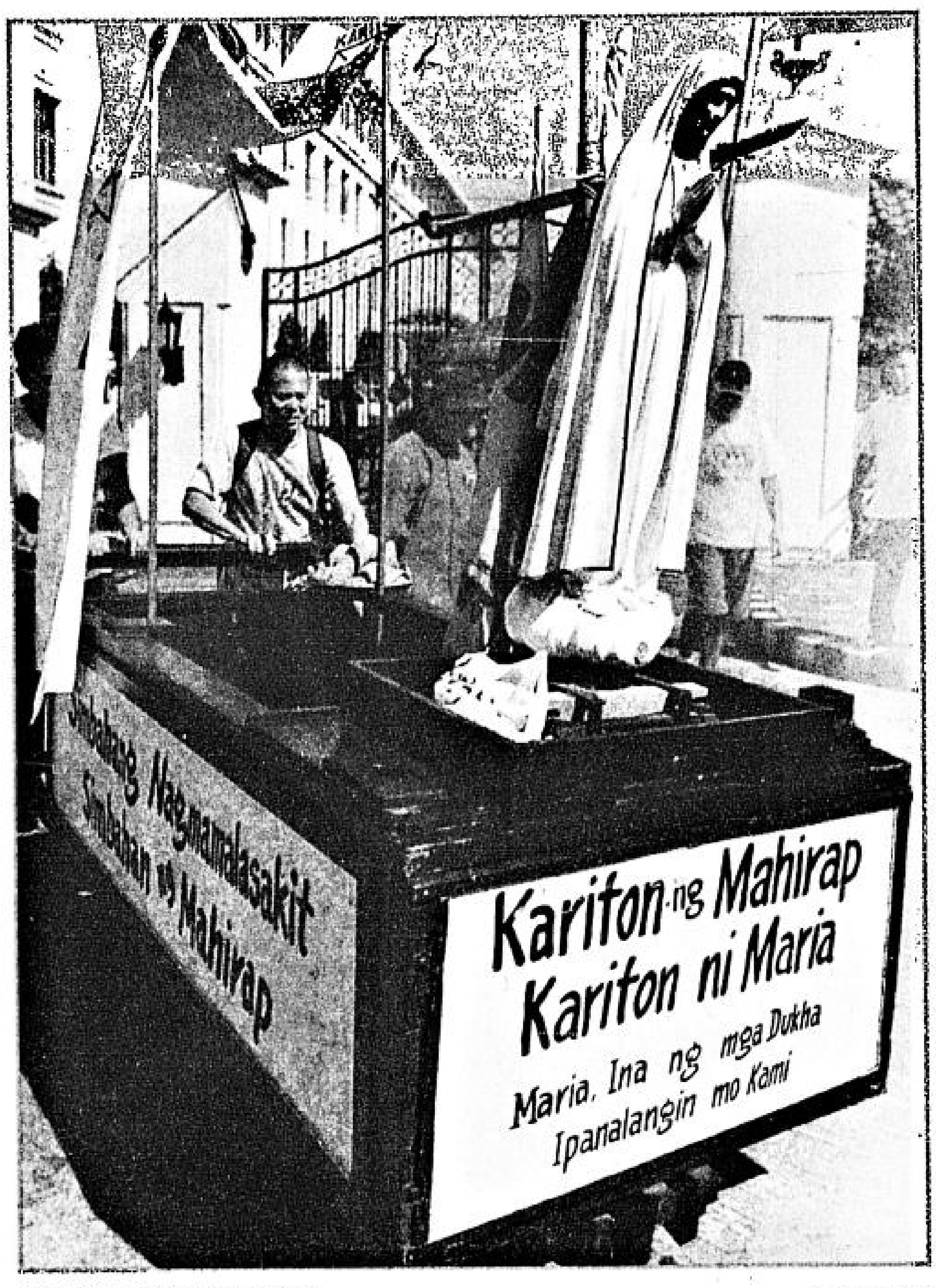
By Volt Contreras

THE PAST is catching up with Environment Secretary Michael Defensor—and environmentalists are not laughing.

When he was housing

GUESS/ A8

PARANG KAHAPON LAMANG...



'KARITON NI MARIA' VAL HANDUMON

Activist priest Father Robert Reyes leaves Malacañang pushing a wooden cart bearing the image of the Virgin Mary and some camote (sweet potato). His message: Instead of imposing new taxes, let's work hard and plant camote. Yesterday was the birthday of the Virgin Mary.

GMA urged to clean up Napocor first

Gov't blamed for power firm mess

TWO PARTY-LIST groups yesterday blamed President Macapagal-Arroyo for the woes of the National Power Corp. (Napocor) and urged her to clean her own backyard of vested interests before engaging in tough talk.

Akbayan and the Partido ng Manggagawa pinned the blame on Ms Arroyo a day after she vowed to take on vested interests that would get in the way of her fiscal reforms.

Napocor's liabilities stood at P1.4 trillion by the end of 2003, or equivalent to 42 percent of the national government debt of P3.3 trillion at the time, according to the Freedom from Debt Coalition.

In a statement, Akbayan Representatives Loretta Ann Rosales, Mario Aguja and Riza Hontiveros said the huge losses of Napocor and the power rate increases amounted to GMA, which stands for Gloria, Meralco and the Agreement reached between the state-run Napocor and the private power utility firm.

"The Filipino people are now paying the price for the past decisions of the President," Aguja said.

He said the President put a cap on the purchased power adjustment of Napocor in 2002 and was responsible for the messed up renegotiations with independent power producers (IPPs).

In May 2002, in response to the public outcry over the PPA charges, Ms Arroyo imposed a cap on what Napocor could recover from consumers for the contracts it had entered into with IPPs.

She reduced Napocor's PPA charge from P1.25 per kilowatt hour down to 40 centavos per kWh, resulting in huge losses for the corporation.

"Most of all, she is seen to have brokered the immoral settlement agreement between Napocor and Meralco that unduly benefited the latter and burdened consumers with higher electricity rates," Aguja said.

Hontiveros said that in exchange for a P20-billion settlement in

GMA URGED/ A4

Gov't sees 5.9% to 6.1% GDP growth this year

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT has raised its economic growth target for the year because of the surprising performance in the first half.

The gross domestic product (GDP), the value of goods produced and services rendered, is projected to grow by 5.9 percent to 6.1 percent this year from an earlier forecast of 4.9 percent to 5.8 percent, according to the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda).

"Since we have already achieved a 6.3-percent GDP growth in the first half, there is reason to adjust our projection to a higher level," Neda Director General Romulo Neri said at a briefing yesterday.

The country posted a 6.4-percent GDP growth in the first quarter, and 6.2 percent in the second quarter, catching both the private sector and government economic managers by surprise.

Because of jitters over the May elections, rising oil prices and the fiscal problem, the government did not expect the GDP to grow more than 6 percent in the first half.

In the second quarter, the services sector grew by 7.3 percent from 5.7 percent in 2003; industry, 5.6 percent from 3.6 percent; and agriculture, fishery and forestry, 4.3 percent from 1.6 percent. The expansion in these sectors led to a 6.2-percent GDP growth in the second quarter.

Neri said the economic growth was expected to slow down in the second half of the year because of the adverse effects of rising oil prices in the world market.

He said GDP for the second half was projected to grow by only 5.5 percent to 5.9 percent, but the first-half growth could still bring the full-year performance to up to 6.1 percent.

The export sector is expected

GOV'T SEES/ A4

Task force spent ₱76M for nothing

Senators cool to keeping probe body on tax scam

By Christine O. Avendaño

ON TOP of not winning even one of 1,000 tax credit fraud cases it has filed, including those seeking to recover stolen money, the task force assigned to investigate and build the cases has spent a whopping P76 million in its existence.

These were among the things that lawmakers discovered yesterday at the initial hearing of the Senate blue ribbon committee on the status of the prosecution of the P5.3-billion tax credit fraud cases.

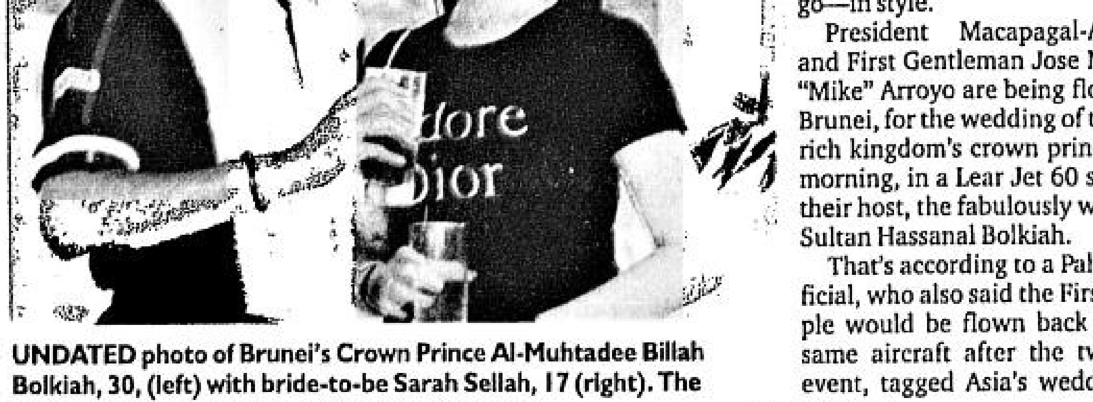
And the lawmakers, led by committee chair Sen. Joker Arroyo and Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, were clearly dissatisfied with the way the Special Presidential Task Force (SPTF) 156 had performed.

They were so dissatisfied that the recommendation of the Department of Finance (DOF) to extend the life of the task force set up in 1999 may be put in jeopardy.

"The task force's life will expire on Oct. 7, and now they're asking for an extension. I do not think we would encourage the extension considering the performance that they have shown," Arroyo told reporters after the two-hour hearing.

Finance Undersecretary Inocencio Ferrer Jr., SPTF co-chair, took a beating mostly from Enrile, who investigated the tax credit scam in the Senate in 1999 and whose privilege speech last

TASK/ A6



UNDATED photo of Brunei's Crown Prince Al-Muhtadee Billah Bolkiah, 30, (left) with bride-to-be Sarah Sellah, 17 (right). The prince will marry the beautiful commoner today. AFP

Brunei sultan sends Lear jet to fetch GMA

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

OFF to the royal wedding they go—in style.

President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo are being flown to Brunei, for the wedding of the oil-rich kingdom's crown prince this morning, in a Lear Jet 60 sent by their host, the fabulously wealthy Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah.

That's according to a Palace official, who also said the First Couple would be flown back in the same aircraft after the two-day event, tagged Asia's wedding of the year.

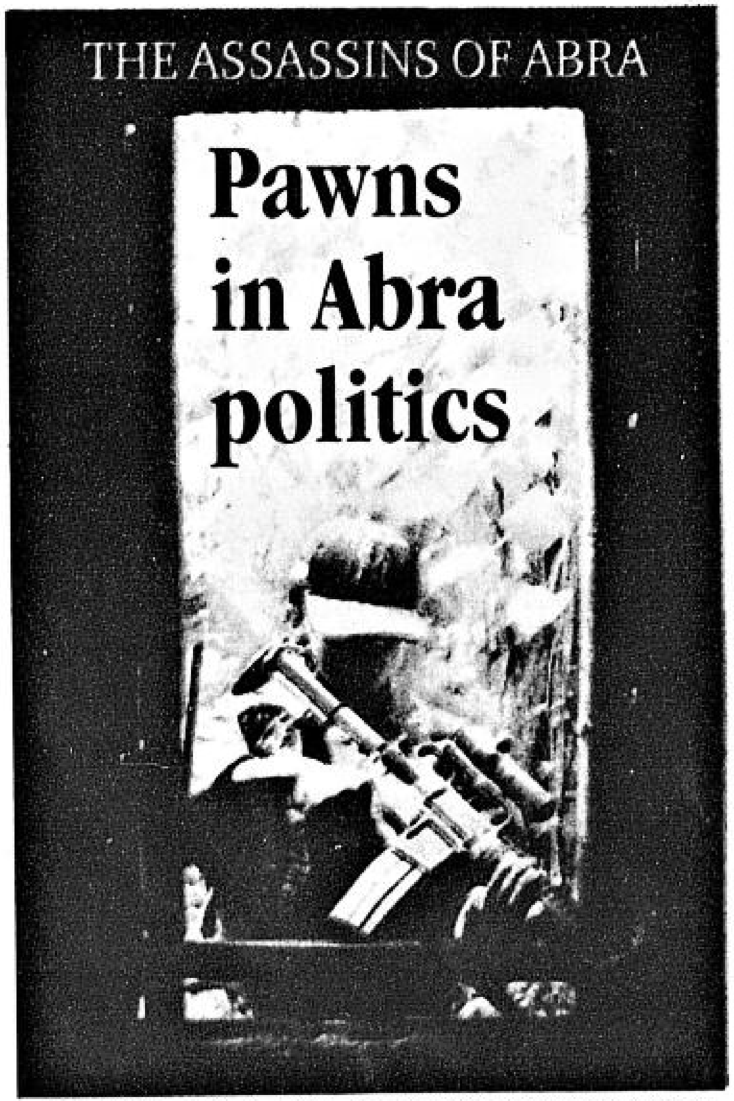
They are scheduled to depart from the Villamor Air Base in Pasay City at 7 a.m. The rest of her delegation will take off an hour earlier, since a Lear Jet 60 has a limited number of seats—seven to eight—to allow for generous space and comfort, and room for baggage that is described as "exceptional." It is the world's most popular midsize jet.

Ms Arroyo is one of the heads of state and royals personally invited by Sultan Hassanal to witness his son, Crown Prince Al-Muhtadee Billah Bolkiah, wed half-Swiss commoner Sarah Pen-

BRUNEI/ A6

THE ASSASSINS OF ABRA

Pawns in Abra politics



"THE ONLY way for the killings to stop is to make them feel how painful it is to lose someone you love." EV ESPIRITU

By Artha Kira Paredes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

(Second of three parts)

BANGUED, Abra—To Senior Supt. Artemio Hicban, Abra police director, politics is the mother of violence in Abra.

When elections are over, only "ordinary crimes" appear in police blotters, he said. Incidents linked to political rivalries drop as the goons—or members of so-called private or partisan armed groups (PAGs)—lie low or make themselves scarce.

"It is only during elections that violence erupts in Abra," Hicban said.

A top official in the province likened the goons in the pay of politicians to pieces on a chess board.

In exchanges, the pawns go first. The more pawns there are on the board, the better, because the king is shielded from attack.

"They need [the pawns] in order to cope with the situation," the official said.

Members of PAGs used to be

PAWNS/ A8

SPECIAL REPORT

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Extreme Northern Luzon will experience cloudy skies with rainshowers and thunderstorms. Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rains.
SOURCE PAGASA

COMPILED BY RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/09/09/04

Second FrontPage

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Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	**Iloilo/Bacolod**	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	**Roxas**	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	**Cebu**	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	**Tacloban**	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	**Gen. Santos**	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	**Zamboanga**	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	**Cagayan de Oro**	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	**Davao**	Cloudy with Rains

Raps vs cops in Abadilla 5 torture urged

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE COMMISSION of Human Rights has asked the justice department to charge 15 policemen for the alleged torture of the suspects in the killing of Col. Rolando Abadilla in 1996.

A congressman also urged the the House committee on human rights to investigate the alleged torture of the five suspects, the so-called Abadilla 5 who were convicted for the murder of the dreaded intelligence officer during the Marcos regime.

The Abadilla 5—Lenido Lumanog, Cesar Fortuna, Joel de Jesus, Rameses de Jesus and Augusto Santos—were convicted on Aug. 11, 1999 and sentenced to death.

They are appealing their conviction before the Supreme Court, claiming that the police had tortured them.

The DOJ last month filed charges against the 15 policemen for violating the constitutional rights of the suspects but not for torture. The Philippines has no law that specifically punishes torture.

On Tuesday, the CHR filed a motion for reconsideration, urging the Department of Justice to indict the policemen for torture through charges of physical injuries and/or grave coercion.

The CHR and a lawyers for the Abadilla 5 said there was enough evidence to charge the policemen with torture.

"The evidence submitted in the case is substantial enough for a finding of probable cause for the indictment of [the policemen] for the offense of torture," said lawyer Emmanuel Neri, director of the CHR Legal and Investigation Office.

Another lawyer for the Abadilla 5, Soliman Santos Jr., said that while the Philippines does not have a law that specifically punishes torture, the 1987 Constitution and the Philippine accession to the International Convention Against Torture mandate the prosecution of acts of torture.

He said the absence of a law should not preclude the prosecution of torture "or what closely amounts to it."

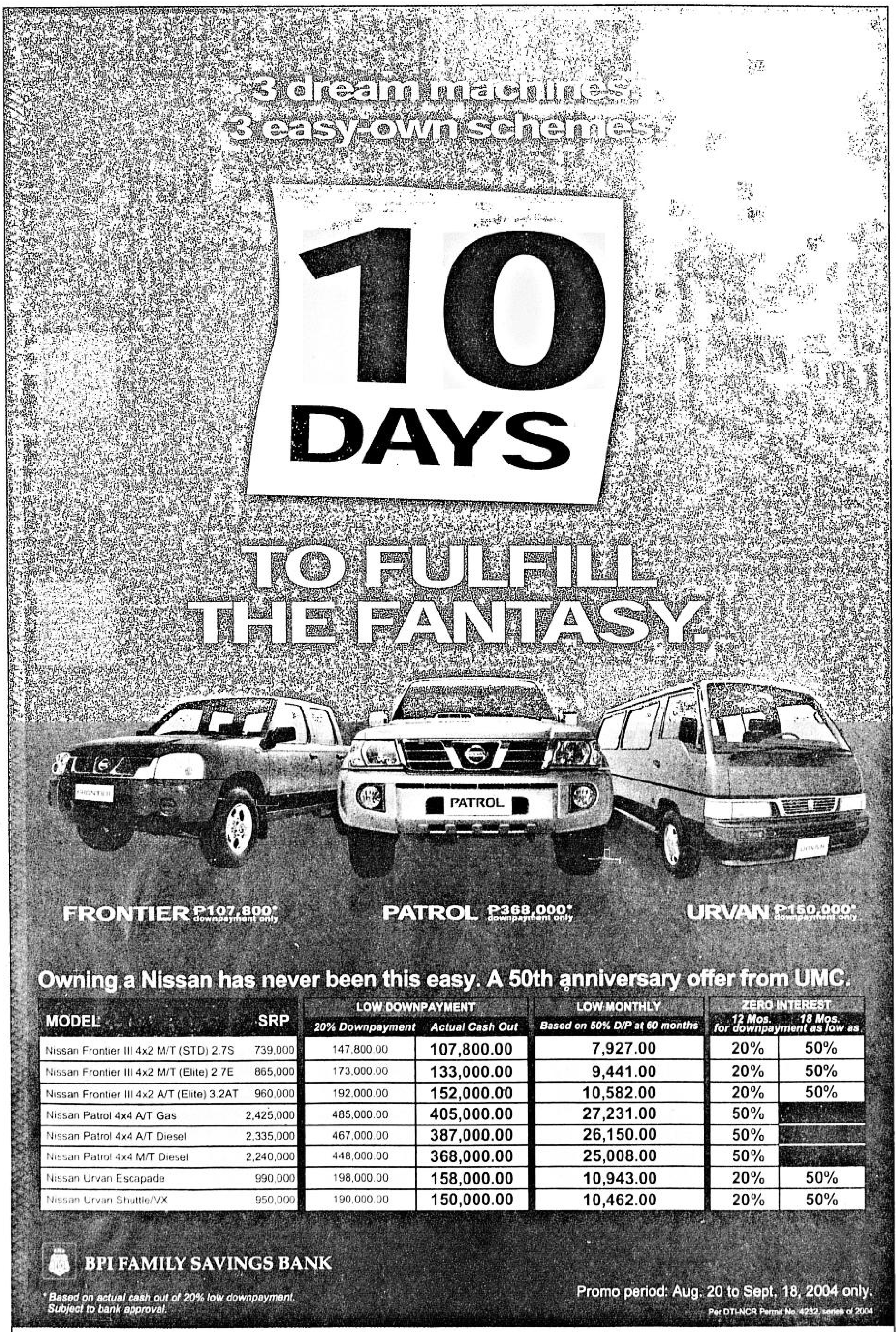
"Actually, torture can also be charged as physical injuries and as maltreatment of prisoners," he said.

Neri said the prescription period for physical injuries and grave coercion should not apply to the case since it involves violations of human rights.

He said that under international law, human rights violations are "imprescriptible because they cannot be lost even by a long passage of time. Man does not lose his human rights even if he fails to use or assert them."

In Congress, Quezon Rep. Danilo Saurez urged the House committee on human rights to investigate the case of the Abadilla 5 whose fate, he said, showed that human rights violations continue in the country despite the existence of a broad array of laws, safeguards and institutions to protect fundamental human rights.

The 15 policemen include the late police Chief Supt. Romulo Sales, Senior Supt. Bartolome Baluyot, Chief Inspectors Robert E. Ganzon and Romeo Regis, Sr. Insp. Anthony Rodolfo, Insp. Rogelio Castillo, SPO4 Dario T. Anasco, SPO2 Pio Tarala, SPO1 Edelberto Nicanor, Insp. Ceddamon, SPO4 Ramira, SPO2 C. Nocum, SPO1 P. Pobre, PO3 Juanito Cabiling, and PO3 Wilfredo Hidalgo.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Nissan Frontier III 4x2 A/T (Elite) 3.2AT	960,000	192,000.00	152,000.00	10,582.00	20%	50%
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Nissan Patrol 4x4 A/T Diesel	2,335,000	467,000.00	387,000.00	26,150.00	50%	
Nissan Patrol 4x4 M/T Diesel	2,240,000	448,000.00	368,000.00	25,008.00	50%	
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3 YEAR WARRANTY

1 year 'pork barrel holiday' proposed

By Carlito Pablo and Dona Z. Pazzibugan

A CONGRESSMAN yesterday proposed a one-year "pork barrel holiday" to help the economy get over the hump.

Rep. Juan Miguel Zubiri (Lakas, Bukidnon) said that giving up the pork barrel or the Priority Development Assistance could be extended if the economy showed no signs of perking up in the near future.

"If such a move will prevent an Argentina-type collapse of the economy, if this is what it takes to pull us from the brink of crisis, then I won't have any problem giving up my pork," he said.

Under the 2004 budget, each congressman is entitled to P70 million in PDAF while senators are allocated P200 million each, or a total of about P20 billion.

Malacañang has proposed a 40 percent cut in the 2005 budget, as one of the measures to trim the budget deficit. Congress has yet to start deliberations on the budget.

Zubiri said the "pork moratorium" could last for a year and should be reviewed after this period.

He admitted that giving up pork could prove to be politically costly for lawmakers whose constituents expect projects from their congressional representatives.

"Giving up pork is the politically correct issue for the Starbucks crowd in Glorietta. But in the barrios, when they hear that a PDAF project will be built in their midst, they throw a fiesta," he said.

On the other hand, the Department of Education has asked Malacañang to exempt it from the ban against local travel and training.

Education Secretary Florencio Abad said while the department would do its part to cut costs to arrest the fiscal crisis, it could not do away with regular training and seminars for public schoolteachers.

In her Administrative Order 103 issued Aug. 31, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered several austerity measures including the suspension of local trips and training unless necessary.

"We have to seek clarification on this because we have to travel for our training. That's essential to what we do," Abad said.

Under AO 103, the President also ruled out overtime pay, suspended hiring and ordered a 10 percent cut on expenses for contractuals.

The order said employees who render overtime work would no longer get paid but would just earn time-off or day-off from regular work based on the extra hours they put in.

DepEd employees protested the removal of overtime pay.

Domingo Alidon, president of the DepEd National Employees Union, said many employees rely on overtime pay to augment their salaries.

With Nelson Forte Flores

Tiglao undergoes heart bypass

PRESIDENTIAL Management Staff chief Rigoberto Tiglao underwent a successful heart bypass operation yesterday afternoon at the Philippine Heart Center in Quezon City.

Secretary Rene Velasco, Philippine Information Agency head who served as Tiglao's deputy when the latter was still presidential chief of staff, confirmed that Tiglao suffered a "mild heart attack" Tuesday evening and was rushed to the hospital.

He is the third ranking aide of President Macapagal-Arroyo who suffered a heart problem while holding his post.

Rene de Villa and Alberto Romulo also had quadruple bypass heart surgery during their post. Romulo was recently appointed foreign secretary.

Tiglao's heart attack occurred just weeks after he left his job as Presidential Chief of Staff to become head of the PMS. He was Ms Arroyo's COS for two years and prior to that, he also served as her spokesperson and press secretary for some time.

Velasco explained that Tiglao's condition could have been partly due to the "demanding" work schedule in the Office of the President.

Juliet Labog-Javellana

GMA welcomes arrival of Malaysian, Brunei monitors

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday welcomed the imminent arrival of military teams from Malaysia and Brunei that will help to monitor a ceasefire with the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front while negotiations to resume peace talks are going on.

A date has yet to be set for the long-delayed resumption of formal peace negotiations to end at least three decades of Muslim insurgency.

The MILF signed a ceasefire with the government in 2002 and later denounced links to foreign terrorist organizations, paving the way for peace negotiations.

It said it was ready to resume talks soon after the government last week cleared senior MILF members of involvement in a spate of bombings in Mindanao last year.

Chief government peace negotiator Silvestre Afable, who is also the Malacañang communications chief, said the talks could begin at about the time the 60-member international monitoring team would be fully deployed in October.

In a "pulong bayan" held in a Muslim village in Dasmariñas, Cavite yesterday, the President said a representative of Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi had told her about the arrival of a nine-member Malaysian advance team to lay the groundwork for the full deployment of the monitoring group.

Othman Bin Abdul Razak had called on the President in Malacañang on Tuesday night to convey the Malaysian government's assurance of support for the peace talks.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said Badawi's message was that Malaysia committed to extend full support for the talks "through hosting, facilitation and deployment of an international monitoring team to observe the current ceasefire and development projects in conflict-affected areas" in Mindanao. *Juliet Labog-Javellana with AFP*

'CHOCOLATE WAR'

Smear campaign traced to losing choco supplier

By Carlito Pablo

A NEW twist in the "chocolate war" at Duty Free Philippines surfaced yesterday in Congress.

Yesterday, Rep. Eduardo Zialcita (Lakas, Parañaque) accused Filipino-Chinese businessman William Tieng, the losing chocolate supplier, as the hand behind the alleged smear campaign against the chocolate deal at Duty Free Philippines.

In a privilege speech, Zialcita said that Tieng's Winning Touch Corp. made a counter-offer for the chocolate and snacks concession which the winning concessionaire, the British Virgin Islands-registered company Eastern Duty Free, "matched, thereby improving the deal for DFP by some P180 million."

Zialcita delivered the privilege speech to defend the award of DFP's chocolate and snacks concession to Eastern Duty Free. Parañaque hosts DFP's headquarters and its flagship shop, DFP Fiesta Mall.

Zialcita also said that all DFP contracts are awarded without public bidding because of the "specialized nature of this state entity as a duty free retailer."

"Intriguingly, Winning Touch Corp., the losing prospective bidder, hit the proposed chocolate deal for having failed to go through public bidding ... because Winning Touch, a company owned by the family of William Tieng, ... is well aware that DFP contracts have never gone through public bidding," Zialcita said.

Zialcita also disclosed that Tieng has been able to corner the choicest supply deals with DFP since 1990.

"And, now, aided by his longtime minions in the DFP Employees Association who raised not even a whimper when he was busy cornering all the deals within DFP, Mr. Tieng is throwing tantrums because the chocolate concession was awarded to another firm," Zialcita said.

Last week, the DFP Employees Association filed a graft complaint against former Tourism Secretary Roberto Pagdanganan and DFP general manager Michael Kho before the Ombudsman over the deal which the employees claim will result in losses of P336 million a year or P1.6 billion in five years in terms of government revenues.

Solons say SC petition won't stop CA confirmation hearings

By Cynthia D. Balana and Philip C. Tubeza

MEMBERS of the House contingent of the congressional Commission on Appointments yesterday said the Supreme Court petition by opposition senators to have the high court nullify the appointments of so-called "acting secretaries" would not stop the bicameral body from acting on President Macapagal-Arroyo's nominees.

Eastern Samar Rep. Marcelino Libanan (Nationalist People's Coalition) said the petitioners overlooked a constitutional fact that the confirmation process starts only after the Cabinet appointments have been made by Malacañang.

Libanan said the majority bloc saw no problem in the confirmation of the Cabinet appointees as the CA proceedings can go on even while the senators' petition was pending with the SC.

Opposition senators, led by Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel, said in their petition that the appointment of the nine "acting secretaries" was unconstitutional as appointments of department heads while Congress was in session could be made only with the consent of the CA.

Until the appointees are confirmed by the CA, they are merely deemed nominated and cannot take their oaths of office, much less perform their duties, the petitioners said.

Libanan pointed out that Article VI, Section 18 of the Constitution, the CA is to act on all appointments submitted to it within 30 session days of the Congress from the date they are submitted.

This meant that the CA would have to act on the appointments only after these were made by the President and not what the minority senators maintain—that the appointments could be done only with the consent of the CA.

Nueva Ecija Rep. Aurelo Umali (Lakas-CMD) said the case before the high court would not stop the confirmation process of Cabinet officials.

"It is the duty of members of Congress through the CA to determine if they are fit to be part of the Cabinet. Besides, the law prescribes the period by which the CA should act on their appointments," he said.

Umali said the provision in the Constitution cited by Libanan clearly stated that the appointment of the President should precede the CA confirmation.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez yesterday dismissed as a mere political ploy the Senate opposition bloc's move to get the Supreme Court to nullify his appointment and that of eight other Cabinet members who are all serving as "acting secretaries."

"Obviously, this is a political maneuver of the opposition," Gonzalez said at a press briefing.

Gonzalez—a lawyer who is a former House member and who also served as Tanodbayan, the precursor of the Ombudsman—said the President had the authority to appoint Cabinet secretaries in an acting capacity while Congress was in session, with or without the CA nod.

He said there is existing legal opinion in the DOJ upholding the President's authority to appoint acting secretaries even while Congress is in session.

He said the DOJ had issued a legal opinion in the case of former Justice Secretary Hernando Perez, affirming that Perez could assume the post even in an acting capacity. He noted that Perez assumed office even while Congress was in session.

Besides Gonzalez, the other Cabinet members whose appointments the opposition senators want nullified are Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Education Secretary Florencio Abad, Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz, Environment Secretary Michael Defensor, Tourism Secretary Joseph Durano, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo, Agrarian Reform Secretary Rene Villa and Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap.

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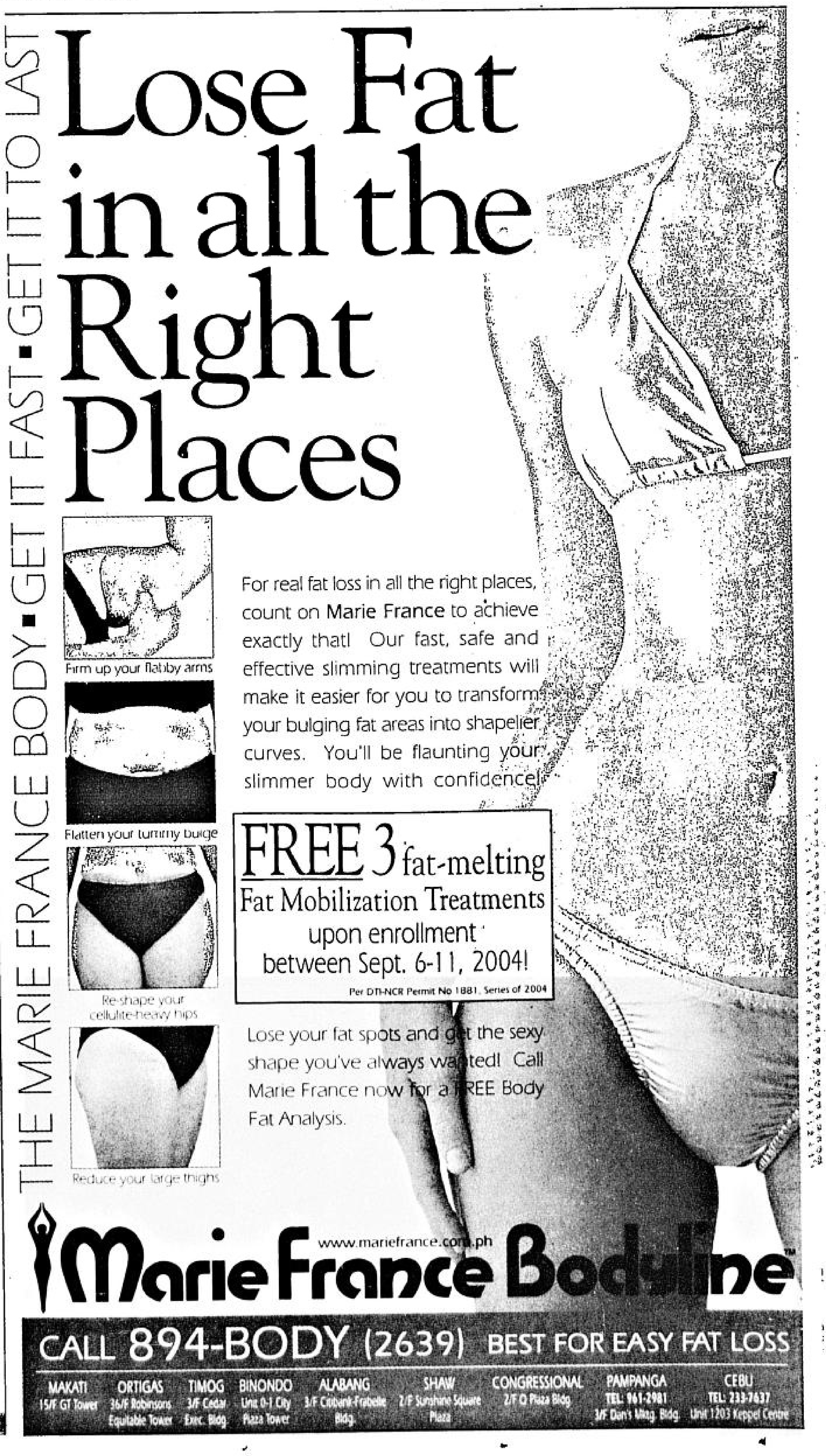

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Employment in RP's biggest firms up, says labor department

By Martin P. Marfil

THERE'S a bright spot on the labor front.

Employment in the country's biggest companies has grown, according to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE).

The labor department yesterday announced that the top 3,300 corporations in Metro Manila posted a 1.9- percent employment growth during the second quarter.

Results of a labor turnover survey by the DOLE's Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics (BLES) showed that the hiring rate among the top 3,300 firms reached 7.34 percent or 73 workers hired per 1,000 employed.

"In absolute terms, the growth means that the employment of enterprises covered in this survey increased by about 19 workers per 1,000 employed as 73 workers per 1,000 were hired while 55 workers per 1,000 were separated from their jobs because of (resignations) or terminations," a BLES report said.

The figure was bigger than that recorded for the first quarter when 59 workers per 1,000 employed were hired, while 61 per 1,000 either resigned or were terminated.

The survey, which was conducted from July to August, covered 500 firms, but only 476 responded. The sample was drawn from the list of the top 3,300 corporations in Metro Manila in 2002, the year when survey was first conducted.

Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas expects more hiring of workers the coming months.

"Employment gains in the country's top corporations provide a benchmark pointing positively to economic resilience. We can reasonably look forward to more job growth toward the Christmas season due to the strengthening economic activities," Sto. Tomas said.

The BLES said the growth was registered in enterprises engaged in real estate, renting and the vague classification of "business activities," which posted a growth rate of 10.04 percent.

This was followed by other community, social and personal services at 8.49 percent. Hotels and restaurants posted an employment growth of 6.47 percent.

Construction, the report said, also registered an "impressive growth" of 5.89 percent.

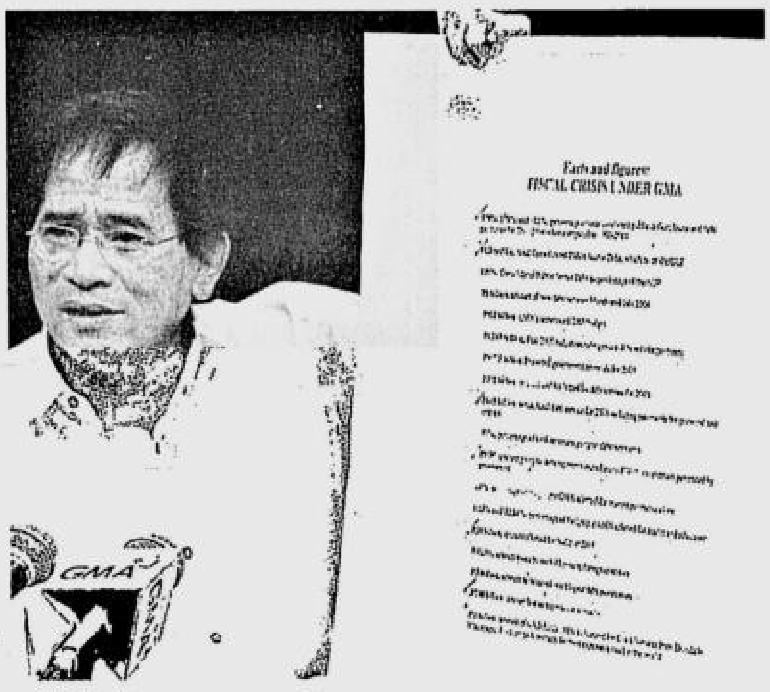
However, the BLES report noted "setbacks" in the private education services and the mining and quarrying subsectors, which registered higher separations of 7.09 percent and 1.36 percent, respectively.

Marginal growth in employment was observed in financial intermediation at 0.60 percent, and manufacturing at 0.54 percent. Electricity, gas and water subsectors posted a 0.50-percent growth.

The report said the higher hiring rate was mainly due to the replacement of separated workers as mirrored in hiring because of business expansion. (2.24 percent) and replacement (5.10 percent.)

Employer-initiated separation was placed at 2.92 percent while employee-initiated job resignation was placed at 2.55 percent.

THIS is where we are, President Macapagal-Arroyo seems to be saying as she explains her projects and points to areas of concern during a "pulong bayan" (town hall meeting) in Barangay Sultan Esmael, a Muslim village in Dasmariñas, Cavite, on Wednesday.



EVANGELIST and defeated presidential candidate Bro. Eddie Villanueva emerges from a long hiatus, flailing at the "fiscal crisis under GMA" during a press con cum rally at the Strata 2000 Building in Ortigas on Wednesday. *(See story on Page A5.)* JOAN BONDOC

Still no go for RP nurses in Japan after 3 days of talks

TOKYO—Japan and the Philippines ended their three-day free trade talks here on Wednesday with no progress in discussions on Tokyo's opening of its nurse market to Filipinos.

"Understanding has been deepened on both sides, but we have not reached any particular agreement during the meeting," said a Japanese foreign ministry official.

"Both sides have not offered any concrete proposal related to the nurse issue," the official said.

Liberalization of labor markets, particularly Japan's acceptance of nurses from the Philippines, is a focal point in their negotiations on concluding a free trade agreement (FTA).

Manila has demanded Japan accept a sizable number of Filipino nurses and caregivers for the elderly, while Tokyo insists passage of national qualifying examinations is a minimum requirement.

If agreed, it would be the first time that Japan has accepted foreign workers as part of an FTA.

Japan and the Philippines are to hold further talks in Manila in late October.

In February, Malacañang said the two countries could forge an accord before the end of the year.

Japan is the Philippines' second-largest trade partner after the United States. Two-way trade in 2002 amounted to $12.52 billion.

Japan already has sealed a free-trade accord with Singapore and been also holding bilateral FTA talks with Mexico, Malaysia, the Philippines and South Korea. *AFP*

GMA urged to clean up Napocor

From page A1

2003, the Arroyo administration, through the Energy Regulatory Commission, allowed Meralco to renege on its 10-year contract to buy electricity from Napocor.

The deal also allowed Meralco's IPPs to run at minimum contracted levels that gave more profits to owners of Meralco who also owns the IPPs.

"The tough talk is good, but how can the President really get in extricating the vested interests that keep on worsening the Napocor problem?" Hontiveros asked.

Hontiveros said the deal between the government and Meralco contributed to the P100 billion in losses incurred by Napocor last year, which are now being recouped through higher power rates.

Rep. Rene Magtubo of Partido ng Manggagawa said the President's promise to take on all vested interests was "false and desperate" and an act that "seeks popularity."

Magtubo said the President herself had yet to explain her overspending during the elections and the misuse of the Ginintuang Masaganang Ani rice funds.

He said that even her fiscal reforms, which, according to him, burden the people with regressive taxes, were insufficient considering the public sector debt of P5.4 trillion.

"She should not wait until 2010 to achieve a budget that spends less for debt and more for social services. Besides, she can do it right away as the 'forceful' president who wants to take on vested interest. That way, she can say that she is a non-political president," Magtubo said.

He said the fiscal crisis was the result of her own economic policies. *Cynthia D. Balana*

Gov't to cut down Napocor work force to save ₱700M annually

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT will further cut down the work force of the bleeding state-owned utility National Power Corp. (Napocor) to generate about P700 million in annual savings.

At a briefing yesterday, Energy Secretary Vince Perez said the combined work force of the Napocor and National Transmission Corp. (Transco) had been slashed to 7,372 as of end-2003 from over 12,000 in 1993.

He said 23 percent of the reduction was implemented over the last two years alone and there was "room for further" rationalization.

But Sen. Joker Arroyo said on Tuesday that he would conduct an inquiry into how Napocor was able to retire its senior officials to the tune of P12 billion even with its huge losses.

Arroyo said at the hearing of the Senate ways and means committee that Napocor paid its top and lowest officials with more than P12 billion. "They could not explain where they got the money," he said.

The Napocor is the single biggest entity that contributes to the country's public sector debt.

Perez noted that the government was planning to privatize 70 percent of the Napocor's Luzon and Visayas capacity by end-2005.

So far, three generation plants using hydro-electric power had been sold—the 3.5 megawatt Talomo, 1.6-MW Agusan and 1.8-MW Barit plant.

Before Napocor could be privatized, he said the national government should speed up the absorption of the corporation's debt so that creditors would agree to the transfer of its assets and debt.

The government earlier said it was willing to absorb P500 billion worth of Napocor's debts.

There was likewise a need to secure congressional franchise for Transco privatization, the energy chief said.

"The power sector reform in the Philippines is a work in progress. Legislative measures are already being implemented and structural reforms are in place," Perez said.

Moving forward, he said there must be more private sector participation to finance capital-intensive energy projects.

He also said competitive rates were necessary to encourage new investments.

The government has drawn up a five-pronged agenda to promote energy independence in five years:

- Increase reserves of indigenous oil and gas.
- Aggressively develop renewable energy sources such as biomass, solar, wind and ocean resources.
- Increase the use of alternative fuels.
- Form strategic alliances with other countries.
- Strengthen and enhance energy efficiency and conservation programs.

Gov't sees 5.9% to 6.1% GDP growth this year

From page A1

to substantially contribute to growth in the second half as the country's exports have begun reaching a diversified foreign market, according to Trade Secretary Cesar Purisima.

He said exports were expected to grow in the second half the way it did in the early part of the year. Exports grew 8.5 percent in the first half, better than the Department of Trade and Industry's full-year projection of 6 percent.

Exports are becoming more stable as the country taps more markets, especially Europe and Asia, according to Purisima.

He said the US share of Philippine exports dropped to 17 percent from 28 percent because of the diversification of Philippine export market.

Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China—the economies expected to post significant growths—are becoming major destinations for Philippine products. They now account for 20.5 percent of Philippine exports.

Neri predicted that the country's GDP could grow to between 5.3 and 6.3 percent in 2005, or almost the same as the 2004 projection because of oil prices are expected to remain at high levels.

As of Sept. 7, the price of Dubai crude, the benchmark used by oil refiner in the country, hit an average of $35 per barrel.

NERI: Highly optimistic JESS YUSON

UTANG NG GOBYERNO.
KAG·AWAN NI GLORIA!
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AUDIT ALL DEBTS

PARTY-LIST Representatives Mario Aguja and Riza Hontiveros-Baraquel are given flowers by militants at a Congress rally urging an audit of the public sector debt on Wednesday. JOAN BONDOC

BSP closes First Savings Bank

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday ordered the permanent closure of the Yujuico family's First Savings Bank and placed the cash-strapped bank under the receivership of the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp.

BSP officer in charge Alberto Reyes said the Monetary Board, the BSP's policy-making body, held an emergency meeting yesterday and passed a resolution at 10:30 a.m. forbidding the bank from further doing business in the Philippines following its failure to service deposit withdrawals.

"The decision of the MB paves the way for the immediate assumption by PDIC of First Savings Bank's assets and liabilities, thereby facilitating the payment of its depositors particularly those with deposits of P250,000 and below," Reyes said.

It was the first bank to be placed under the PDIC's receivership since Congress passed a new charter which increased the minimum deposit insurance coverage from P100,000 to P250,000.

Established in 1965, First Savings Bank's head office is in E. Rodriguez, Quezon City. It has three branches located in Cubao, C.M. Recto and Tanay, Rizal.

Reyes said the MB's decision to permanently shut down the bank followed the failure of First Savings Bank to meet withdrawals of its depositors early this week.

Late Tuesday afternoon, bank chair Brendon Yujuico formally notified the BSP through a letter that their board declared a "bank holiday," or suspended operations, due to sudden heavy and massive withdrawals by depositors at its four branches.

First Savings Bank has P213.47 million worth of assets as against P215.58 million worth of liabilities, based on its statement of financial conditions as of end-June. The bank has been deficient in capital since 2000, but it pleaded with the BSP to give it more time to bring in fresh funds.

"Since last year, the Yujuico family, which is the majority owner of First Savings Bank, had been in negotiations with prospective investors for the sale of the bank. However, the death of family patriarch Jesus Yujuico late last year derailed negotiations," Reyes said.

The Yujuico family likewise owned the defunct bus liner Yujuico Transit.

In a separate statement, the PDIC reported that the bank had 10,609 account holders with total deposits of about P193.93 million, almost all of which fall under the new minimum deposit insurance coverage.

"PDIC is currently conducting an inventory of assets and records of the bank. It has also started assessing and examining the bank's deposit records in preparation for the servicing of claims of insured deposits," the PDIC said.

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JIL spurns calls for donations

By Blanche S. Rivera

DON'T expect Jesus is Lord Church Worldwide to give a cent to the Bayanihan Fund.

JIL founder and Bangon Pilipinas president Eddie Villanueva yesterday said that the JIL and Bangon supporters would not contribute to the Bayanihan Fund and even warned donors that the government could use their donations for personal gain.

The evangelist, whose group claims three million members here and abroad, made the announcement after some Christian leaders had pledged to help the government by passing a second offering in their churches for the Bayanihan Fund.

"It could be stupidity on the part of the stakeholders (to pour out money for the government)... The cause of the crisis is the incumbent administration," he said.

Villanueva, who lost the presidential race in the last elections, took President Macapagal-Arroyo to task for claiming during the campaign that the economy was doing well.

He said the government led the people to believe that the fiscal situation was fine when it was borrowing left and right, plunging the country deeper into debt.

Villanueva said that the "frightening statistics," including a P5.3 trillion consolidated public sector debt, was "enough to justify an uprising."

Aravilla writes 30

REPORTER Jose Felipe "Boyet" Aravilla Jr. died in his sleep early morning yesterday. He was 29.

Aravilla was a journalist for nine years. He worked for the Philippine Star and the Manila Standard, covering the Comelec, the Church, the police and local governments.

He resigned from the Philippine Star two weeks ago to join the INQUIRER on Sept. 16.

He was also a contributor to the Philippines Free Press and Newsbreak. He wrote several investigative pieces on corruption in the Department of Justice, Customs and the New Bilibid Prisons, and the plight of residents of the Baseco compound.

Aravilla was a fourth year law student at the Lyceum of the Philippines. He received his journalism degree from the University of Santo Tomas.

He is survived by his mother Vicky, and only sister Odette.

His body lies in Aravilla Compound, M.H. del Pilar corner Lingahan streets, Malanday, Valenzuela City. Interment has been set next week at the Veinte Reales Memorial Park in Valenzuela City.

Tanong ng Bayan

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OCWs in Iraq: Dapat bang alisin na ang ban?

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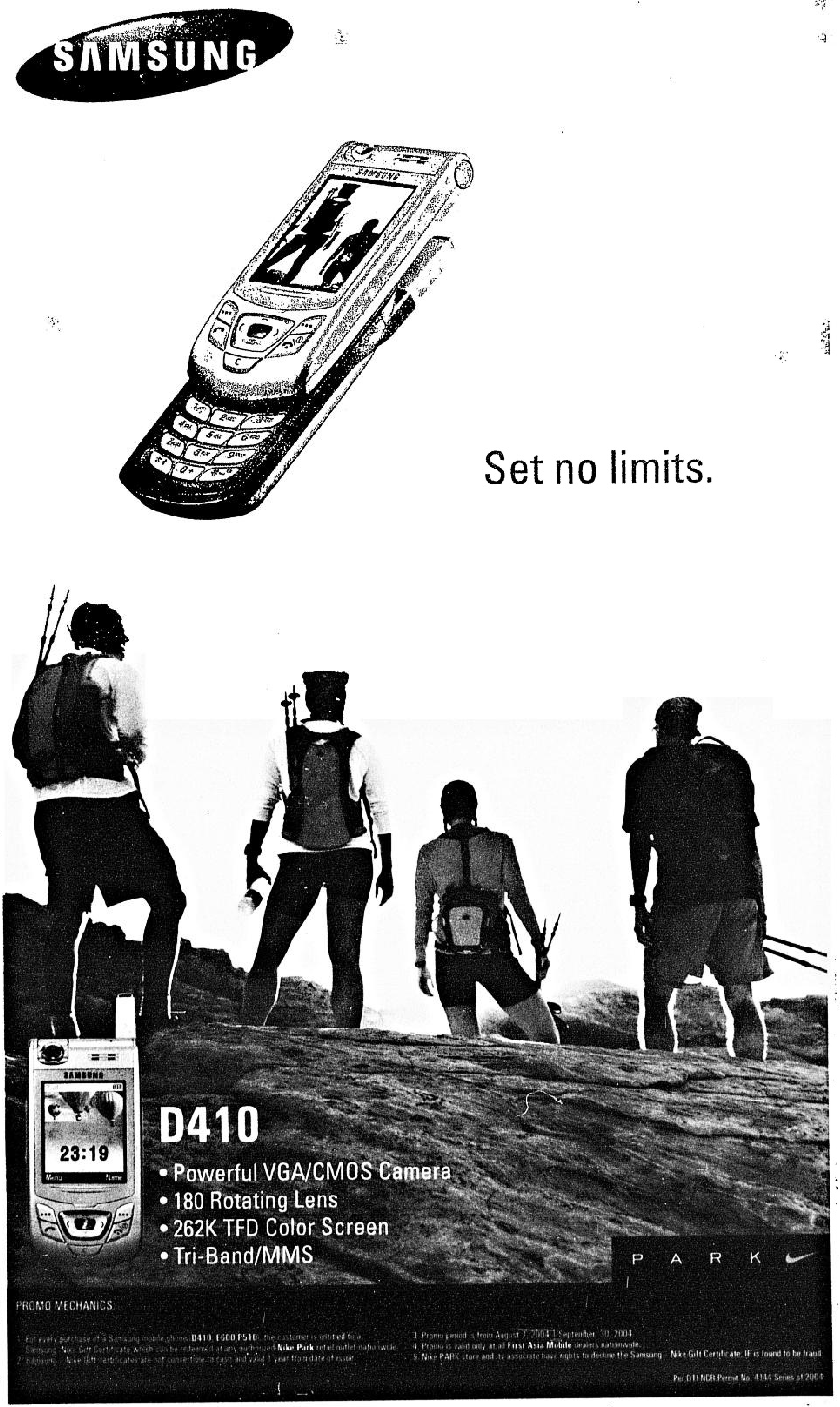
"ban o d i-ban su2god c juan! ocw b ang dpat s ma3yan? tao b kalakal n mainam? ito b ang pngakong halalan?"
Rapy Miralles, Mandaluyong City

"tama n ang 1 angelo dela cruz u2lit paba tayo?kya wag alisin ang ban."
Neil D. Vitug, San Mateo, Rizal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Per DTI NCR Permit No. 4144 Series of 2004

TAX CREDIT SCAM. From left, One-Stop-Shop executive director Ernesto Q. Hiansen, deputy executive secretary Waldo Flores, finance undersecretary Inocencio Ferrer Jr., Task Force 156 executive director Alan Ventura and senior state prosecutor Pamela L. Escobar take their oath before the start of the Senate investigation on the tax credit fraud cases.

SEN. Juan Ponce Enrile grills finance officials as Sen. Joker Arroyo listens during the Blue ribbon committee hearing on Wednesday on the status of the P5.3-billion tax credit fraud cases.

PHOTOS BY JESS YUSON

Task force spent ₱76M for nothing

From page A1

month decrying the dismissal of some of the cases triggered the new Senate inquiry.

The INQUIRER last month reported that out of the 60 cases seeking to collect against those with fraudulently acquired tax credit certificates, 15 had been dismissed and seven more were up for dismissal.

The reasons given by various regional trial courts for dismissing the cases filed by the Bureau of Customs (BOC) were "lack of interest to prosecute," "no effort on the part of the plaintiff to pursue the implementation" and "failure to prosecute."

Grilling

During the hearing, Enrile and Arroyo asked Ferrer for the task force's "accomplishment report."

Ferrer said the SPTF had so far filed 1,000 administrative and civil cases in the Office of the Ombudsman and the Sandiganbayan.

Enrile repeatedly asked Ferrer what cases the task force had filed to recover money from those who used fake certificates, and the latter said 59 collection cases had been handled by the BOC.

Enrile demanded to know how the task force could have spent all that money without having handled a single case.

Ferrer said that while the BOC had filed the cases, the task force had conducted the investigation and "assisted" the bureau by providing the witnesses and documenting the evidence.

Enrile then told Ferrer to read before the committee the task force's mandate under Executive Order No. 156.

Summing up what Ferrer had read, Enrile said it was clear that the mandate included assisting in the prosecution of the cases.

"Did you understand your mandate? You just investigate, gather evidence, file cases, and then forget all about it and leave it to other people to handle [the cases]," the senator said.

Abominable

What particularly riled Enrile and Arroyo was the move of the SPTF to file cases against vital state witnesses.

Enrile asked Ferrer why the task force had filed cases against former SPTF head Alfredo Salanga, executive director Ernesto Hiansen, and Marlene Marquez and Philip Santiago, both officials of the One-Stop Shop Duty and Credit Drawback Center (OSS), as well as Rose Chingkoe, sister-in-law of Faustino Chingkoe.

The OSS is a unit of the DOF responsible for processing applications for tax credits.

Ferrer explained that in the course of the task force's investigation, some of these people were identified as involved in a tax credit scam.

Enrile interrupted Ferrer, saying that state witnesses were called such because they were participants to a crime.

Arroyo joined in, asking why the SPTF would utilize state witnesses to help the government and then "turn around and prosecute them."

"This is abominable," Arroyo said.

Enrile informed the committee that he had tried to get Rose Chingkoe to testify at Senate hearings but was unsuccessful.

"You're prosecuting her, and I know why you did that," Enrile told Ferrer.

Sen. Ralph Recto, who was present at the hearing, asked Enrile why the task force was prosecuting Chingkoe.

"Well, in order to emasculate her as witness," Enrile replied. "You're dealing here with potent people ... They are not ordinary people."

Marquez and Santiago had said they were planning to sue the SPTF for malicious prosecution. They said their being tagged as suspects could be intended to taint their credibility and deliberately weaken the government's cases.

Unbelievable

DOF employees broke into jeers when Ferrer said the tax credit scam continued to this day "in different forms, in a different manner and schemes at the One-Stop Shop Center."

Ferrer made the statement after Arroyo asked him how the SPTF could proceed with its investigation when it had no state witnesses.

"People who are working for you, Mr. Undersecretary, do not believe you," Enrile said.

Summing up the findings at the hearing, Enrile told the committee: "The evident situation to me is that there is no real effort to prosecute the people involved and to collect taxes.

"In fact, efforts are being done to thwart the resolution of the cases so that the government can't recover its losses through mechanisms ... to delay the collection, as well as to dissuade the witnesses from cooperating and testifying for the government."

'Supervising ourselves'

While the DOF recommends the extension of the life of the SPTF, it now refuses to handle the latter's supervision.

Finance Secretary Juanita Amatong, SPTF chair, said the task force should not be dissolved just yet because of the big number of tax credit fraud cases that had yet to be solved.

"The DOF should not anymore be involved in its supervision, and finance officials concurrently working as officers of the task force should be removed. This is because we cannot be supervising ourselves," Amatong told reporters after the mid-year economic briefing held yesterday.

Amatong proposed that the supervision of the SPTF be transferred to Malacañang.

SPTF executive director Alan Ventura was earlier quoted as saying he wanted an extension because the task force was in the middle of preparing more tax credit fraud cases against over 90 companies.

But the task force itself has been accused of bungling its own cases and burning vital witnesses.

The SPTF has been partly blamed for the dismissal of 14 tax credit fraud cases involving over P1 billion in lost revenues for the government.

It is also being criticized for its recent move to name OSS members Marquez and Santiago as suspects to two cases involving Victory Textile Mills.

The two are vital witnesses to almost all of the government's tax credit fraud cases.

Ventura has denied any personal motive in making the charges. "We are only doing our job. If they are really innocent, they can just explain themselves before the Ombudsman," he said.

With a report from Michelle V. Remo

Brunei sultan sends Lear jet to fetch GMA

From page A1

giran Salleh Ab Rahaman.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye could not say how big the President's official party would be, or who would be spending for the trip.

Bunye said Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, a personal friend of the sultan, was invited but could not make it due to a conflict in schedule.

But the First Couple should go, Bunye said. "First of all the Sultan of Brunei is a very valued friend of the Philippines and it's not often that you get invited to such an event where the guest list is so limited."

The Associated Press said 6,000 VIPs from around the world were invited to the royal banquet tomorrow night. They were described by Agence France-Presse as "wealthy and powerful friends of the groom's father."

Palace sources said Ms Arroyo would be accompanied by Philippine Consul General to Los Angeles Marciano Paynor Jr., presidential adviser on foreign visits, a handful of security men, her personal hair stylist Gener Miranda.

A top secret was the presidential wardrobe for the social event. The sources said she might wear the Inno Sotto *terno* that she wore for her inauguration on June 30 to either the wedding rites or to the banquet. They said she tried on the outfit recently.

"There will be very fashionable guests there, like the Queen of Jordan," one Palace source noted. But Ms Arroyo looked regal in the green and blue terno that she wore during her inaugural on June 30, the source said.

The aircraft bearing the First Couple is expected to touch down at the Brunei International Airport at 8:50 a.m. They will proceed immediately to the palatial Empire Hotel, where they are billeted.

At around 10 a.m. they will be at the riverside Istana Nurul Imam—the 1,788-room main palace—for the *bersanding*, or royal wedding rites, a half hour later.

Blue bloods

In Brunei's capital Bandar Seri Begawan, dignitaries and blue bloods from around the world began arriving yesterday for the lavish nuptials.

"The airport hasn't been this busy in a while," said Amin Subehi, a worker at the international airport.

Huge billboards of the wedding couple lined the streets of the usually sleepy capital, where a parade was scheduled after the wedding. Businesses prominently displayed their well-wishes, although some said they were pressured to do so. They would not elaborate, Bruneians being generally reluctant to speak ill of the sultan and his family, who have ruled behind a veil of secrecy for more than 600 years.

The Duke of Gloucester Prince Richard, representing Britain's Queen Elizabeth II, was the first foreign guest to arrive. He is the only European royal on the VIP list. He came down a staircase from a commercial flight and walked on a red carpet to a limousine on the tarmac.

Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, making his international debut since taking office last month, was also among the earliest arrivals, followed by Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri and Japan's Crown Prince Naruhito.

The future Japanese emperor jetted in without his wife, Princess Masako. The Imperial Household Agency said in July that Masako, 40, was undergoing treatment after experiencing bouts of depression and anxiety.

Scheduled to arrive later in the day were Saudi Arabia's Prince Bandar—Riyadh's ambassador to Washington—and Prince Saud.

Also on the impressive roster are Bahrain's King Hamad, Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia and most of Malaysia's royalty.

The other invited Asian leaders are Prime Ministers Thaksin Shinawatra of Thailand and Abdullah Ahmad Badawi of Malaysia.

Elder statesmen Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia, and Lee Kuan Yew and Goh Chok Tong of Singapore were invited as well.

Although there was no representative from the Thai royal family, they sent a message of congratulations and a gift via the ambassador to Brunei, according to officials in Bangkok.

Malaysian King Syed Sirajuddin, whose five-year term expires in 2007 under the rotating leadership of his country's largely ceremonial monarchy, is scheduled to arrive tomorrow in time for the royal banquet.

Gracious, intelligent

The 30-year-old Prince Al-Muhtadee Billah is in line to become the 30th sultan in his country's unbroken chain of succession of rulers. A billiards and snooker enthusiast, he was educated at Oxford, where he took up Islamic studies and a diplomatic course.

His bride, a 17-year-old university student, is "known among her teachers and friends for her grace, intelligence, and positive attitude," according to the official wedding booklet.

She was born to a Bruneian father and a Swiss nurse, Suzanne Aeby, who met while they were studying in London in the 1970s, officials said.

Although the Muslim nuptials will showcase the Southeast Asian kingdom's ancient origins. Brunei is one of the region's smallest countries, and shares Borneo island with Malaysia and Indonesia.

After the wedding rites, which will reportedly take only 15 minutes, the couple will be paraded across the capital in a carriage, accompanied by 105 limousines carrying royal family members.

Fireworks will light up the sky for three nights. The local unit of oil giant Royal Dutch Shell has donated 500,000 Brunei dollars (US$292,400; euro 243,700) for the display, and for cultural events to be hosted by popular performers from Malaysia.

Absolute ruler

Sultan Hassanal, 58, is the absolute ruler of his 350,000 subjects.

He was the world's richest man before the advent of the high-tech era and the rise of mogul Bill Gates and other self-made billionaires—and before a series of financial blunders blamed on his younger brother, Prince Jefri—in the 1990s.

The monarch is also his country's prime minister, and heads the military and ministries of defense and finance. His Cabinet includes royal family members who stay in several palaces. He lives in the main palace, and is reported to have a private collection of more than 150 Rolls-Royces.

Brunei draws its wealth from oil and gas revenues, and the ruling family's extravagance is legendary.

This is evident in the pampering of the wedding guests. At the Empire Hotel where many of them—including the Duke of Gloucester, Japan's Naruhito, Bahrain's King Hamad, Ms Arroyo and the other Southeast Asian leaders—are booked, the massive columns in the atrium, and the toilet brushes, are gold-plated.

The other guests are staying in equally opulent villas built in 2000 for then US President Bill Clinton and other world leaders when Brunei hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit.

A source familiar with the arrangements said each guest would have his or her own butler.

With reports from AP and AFP

PNP to print posters of top 20 most wanted men

From page A1

Soon, you will see their faces on posters the Philippine National Police will put up starting this month at transportation terminals and on walls near schools, public markets and churches.

To show it is serious in capturing major crime suspects, the PNP is printing thousands of posters containing the mug shots of the top 20 fugitives still at large.

The posters will spell out the corresponding rewards which informants will get if they help turn the suspects in.

The idea came from Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, who used the same strategy against suspected kidnappers last year when he still headed the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force.

Reyes' strategy led to the arrest of nearly half of the country's 20 most wanted kidnap suspects then, owing to leads provided by citizens who saw their face on the posters, police said.

List of fugitives

Seven of the remaining kidnap suspects will have their places on the new PNP posters. They include the brothers Rolly and Harold Fajardo, Hedelito "Eddie" Trinidad, ex-policeman Allan Estrada, Mario Valerio, Ronald Roilan, and Felizardo Pagulayan.

The reward for Trinidad's arrest is P850,000 while that for Estrada's is P825,000. Valerio, Roilan and Pagulayan each carries a P500,000 price on their heads.

The Fajardo brothers, alleged leaders of the notorious Batangas-based kidnap-for-ransom group, are among four fugitives ranked in No. 2 spot on the PNP list. They have a P1-million bounty each.

Also ranked No. 2 are murder suspect Corey Dickpus and Eduardo Iran alias Boy Muslim, the alleged gunman of former Antique Gov. Evelio Javier.

The 1986 murder of Javier, an outspoken critic of Marcos, helped fuel opposition to the dictatorship that eventually led to its downfall.

Ex-rebel tops list

No. 1 on the PNP list is Ricardo Peralta, an alleged gun-for-hire wanted in a kidnap-for-ransom case. Described by the police as a former New People's Army commander and founder of the Red Vigilante Group, Peralta carries a price of P1.2 million on his head.

Another suspect on the PNP list is ex-Supt. Rafael Cardeno, the Young Officers' Union chair who allegedly masterminded the murder of former Army officer Baron Cervantes in Las Piñas on Dec. 31, 2001.

The convicted gunman, ex-Marine Sgt. Joseph Mostrales, has said in a sworn statement that Cardeno ordered and paid his group to liquidate Cervantes.

The slain Army officer had linked Cardeno to alleged efforts to destabilize the Arroyo administration. Cardeno has denied the charges against him.

Malacañang has offered a P500,000 reward to anyone who can help pinpoint the whereabouts of Cardeno.

Socialite's son

Also on the PNP list is Jose Maria Panlilio, son of the late socialite and jeweler Fe Panlilio.

The Panlilio son has been missing since he allegedly shot to death brothers Ariel Real and Albert Gutierrez in Calamba, Laguna, on July 15, 2003.

The PNP's notoriety list also includes Ben Ventura (robbery, P825,000) on the 8th spot, Tigre Jakiri (kidnapping and serious illegal detention, P700,000), 9th, Roberto Buenaventura (statutory rape, P550,000), 10th, Jordan Diagan (murder, P550,00), 11th, and Amado Bucala (murder, P550,000).

Rolando Alambag (homicide), Loida Magpatoc (murder) and Jaime Gonzales (robbery) have a P500,000 bounty each.

Subic Freeport locators buck new taxes

By Carlito Pablo

FOREIGN and local investors operating at the Subic Freeport are threatening to close their businesses over the government's plans to impose additional taxes in the special economic zone.

Rep. Milagros Magsaysay (Independent, Zambales) raised this warning as the Bureau of Internal Revenue is poised to amend tax incentives granted to Subic investors.

"The Subic Bay Freeport Chamber of Commerce (SBFCC) has already warned the government that if this happens, several investors will close shop. This could lead to massive layoffs," she said.

The BIR earlier announced that it would issue new revenue regulations in special economic zones, particularly the Subic Freeport, in order to squeeze more revenues for the government.

Magsaysay said the BIR's plan would backfire and affect President Macapagal-Arroyo's 10-point program which included the generation of more jobs and the development of the Subic-Clark corridor.

Under Republic Act No. 7227 or the Bases Conversion Law, investors in special economic zones are required only to pay 5-percent tax on gross income in lieu of all other taxes.

"The 5- percent gross income tax was imposed by law to lure foreign and local investors to put up business in this premier freeport zone," Magsaysay said. She added that since the law was passed by Congress, it is only the legislative branch which could amend it and not the BIR.

Among the new regulations being eyed by the BIR is disallowing all administrative, selling and operating expenses even if these expenses are incurred directly and exclusively in registered business activities.

Under existing regulations, Subic investors are entitled to tax breaks on direct costs incurred in their operations.

Magsaysay said she is filing a resolution urging the President to order the Department of Finance and the BIR to come up with a "fair solution."

"The Subic investors are willing to sit down with our tax authorities at any time to discuss their plight," she said.

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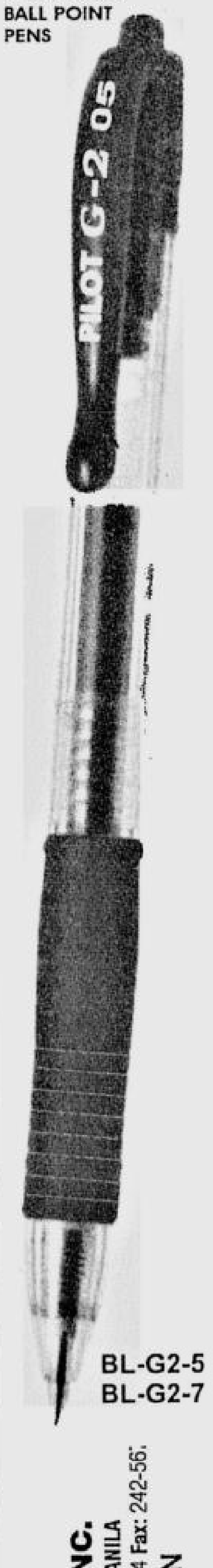

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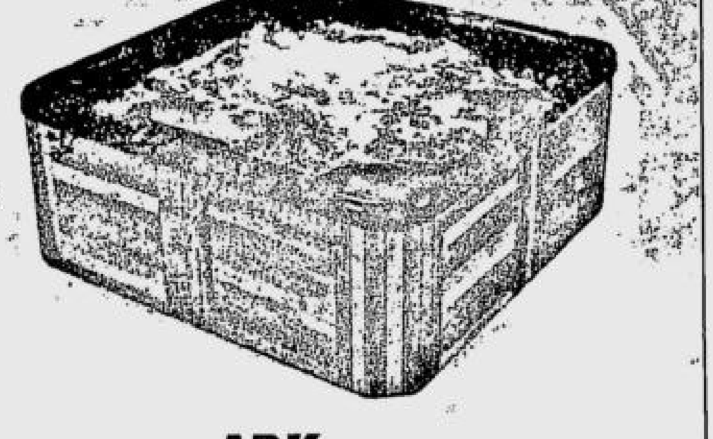

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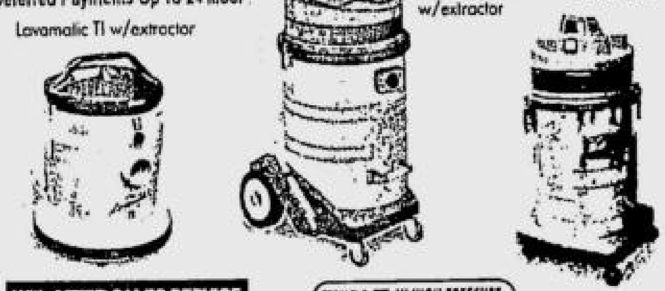

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Pawns in Abra politics

From page A1

HOW to hold a gun is the first thing they teach a new recruit of private armed groups in Abra. This is followed by training in military tactics, how to secure the bosses, and how to stage ambuscades.

EV ESPIRITU

called *saka-saka* (barefoot goons), said former media practitioner Lakay Tasyo, referring to a group of armed men who used to roam barefoot in remote villages in the Ilocos region in the 1960s.

"The term 'saka-saka' was coined because the politicians from Ilocos Sur at the time would go to remote areas and call on the men there to join their group, promising them only food and a place to live in as payment," Lakay Tasyo, 84, said.

Some of the recruits were so poor that they could not even buy a pair of slippers, he said.

Some politicians without money or "connections" to hire goons from outside their territories "had to take in locals who were willing to do that kind of job for them," a provincial official said.

Abra old-timers said that "imported" goons hired during the election season were sent home after their contracts ended.

As good as soldiers

Xander, 64, a former commander of a private army of two Abra governors, said he recruited several saka-saka from remote towns in the province.

During his time, he said, his group would train recruits for a week in Langiden town before assigning them various tasks.

These men were taught military tactics and techniques in handling guns and securing their bosses. They were also trained in staging ambuscades.

On rare occasions, even soldiers would help train the men, Xander said.

"The goons who came from the barrios wore slippers. Compared with soldiers in fatigue uniforms and combat boots, they were as good [skills-wise], though they were barefoot," he said.

'Programmed to die'

Those assigned as close-in security men were playfully called "*pinambabala sa kanyon* (cannon fodder)."

"They were trained to take bullets meant for whoever they were protecting. They were programmed to die for their bosses," Xander said.

Later, politicians' reliance on local men made the importation of goons from outside unnecessary, he said.

Two local officials and a member of a political family in Abra admitted to the INQUIRER that they maintained PAGs. These three men exude power and might, and at least one of them was educated in Manila. Their PAGs are powerful, well trained and well equipped.

"We are young and we would get better as we get older," one of them said.

"But not everything that has been written about us is true," said Vladimir, 27, said to be the most aggressive of the trio.

Adolf, 29, said that maintaining a private army was very important in order to level the political playing field in Abra.

"As someone educated in Manila, I had a different perspective of how the political playing field should be. But when a mayor, who happened to be my close friend, was assassinated, it was then that I decided to put up my own private army," said Adolf.

"You should never let violence defeat you," he added.

From one warlord to another

Adolf was 10 years old when he lost his youngest brother in an ambush staged by their family's political rivals. He said both his parents still carried the scars from the wounds they suffered in that incident.

The scars have become constant reminders of that tragedy.

Adolf said that his father, also a former politician, never wanted to have goons but the murder of his brother made him realize the need for them.

When Adolf set up his army, he only needed to recall into service those who had worked for his father. Some of them were sons of the first-generation goons who worked for the old man.

"It was more like the force of circumstances," Adolf said. "I know that right now, P5 million will go to my lucky killer. (The principle here is you have to) arm yourself or be left behind."

Ares, 33, is anything but a coward. When he walks into a restaurant or a bar here, customers would leave one after the other. But this does not bother him.

The pains of loving

"The only way for the killings to stop is to make them feel how painful it is to lose someone that you love," he said.

"When I was in Grade 2, our house was strafed by goons. We had to hide under the beds," he said.

After that incident, Ares said he vowed that no more gunfire would shatter the peace and quiet of his home again.

"Nothing and no one should make me feel that helpless anymore," he said.

Ares said he started his private army during the 1998 elections with the help of Jonathan, a son of a veteran goon in the province.

"We went to different barangays of our town and we asked the leaders to give us the money they got supposedly to buy votes," he said. "They trusted us and told us that we could have it because, anyway, they did not really like to vote for the candidates who gave it to them."

Said Jonathan: "We bought our first guns from Vigan (using the money we solicited). Some were not even in good condition but we were able to make them work."

Jonathan's home village in Abra is the only one populated by Ilocanos. He said he migrated to the province in the 1960s when his uncle and father decided to work as goons for local politicians.

Election is show time

Ares said his group grew like a "barkada" (gang).

"After recruitment, the first step is always to teach them how to hold a gun," he said.

When Ares is not around, Jonathan makes sure that their men do not starve and are well taken care of.

In the town where Ares and Jonathan grew up, election time means a showdown between private armies of rival political parties.

"They make their presence felt during elections," Ares said.

"Most of my men are cousins, distant relatives and longtime family friends so it is not as if we ever treat them like hired guns. They are not goons," he said.

"What we eat is not different from what they eat. *Hindi nakahiwalay ang banga nila* (We share the same jar)."

Goons covered by insurance

Ares said his men were covered by insurance policies so that if they got killed, their families would not starve.

There is no age limit for those who want to join his group. "As long as they can do it, that's enough," he said.

The youngest in his group is 12 years old, according to Ares. Adolf's group has a 13-year-old fighter.

"Most of them are volunteers. In the selection process, you should be able to distinguish between those who are really interested and those who just want to hold a gun," Ares said.

Background checks are run on applicants and closest relatives and longtime, trusted family friends are preferred, he said.

Some members of Adolf's and Ares' PAGs are in school while some are employed in "strategic places," a euphemism for government and law enforcement offices where they could get information on political rivals and their allies.

'We want vengeance'

Some are former members of the communist New People's Army and the militia Cordillera People's Liberation Army.

Most PAG members, Ares said, have lost at least a family member to political violence.

"They are doing this of their own free will. They don't demand much and money is not the issue," Ares said.

Said Adolf: "Death has never demoralized us."

Said Ares: "We are not afraid to die. Bringing the closest people in our lives to the graves has made us more dedicated in our pursuit. Our motivation here is vengeance."

But he said the group would make sure that their men would not hurt innocent people while carrying out their jobs.

When a PAG member dies, other members, including former members, return to their native towns and regroup.

And family members of those killed do not blame the warlords for the deaths.

It pays to be a goon

"In fact, their relatives would make it a point to come to our house and tell us to take care of ourselves," Ares said. "They would be very concerned about our safety," Ares said.

"I'm not like others who would leave their dead behind. I claim their bodies from the funeral parlors because the least I could give their families is a decent burial for their loved ones," Ares said, in Tagalog.

The bond between the warlord and his men lasts.

"Money cannot buy everything ... What is involved here is camaraderie and honoring one's word," Ares said.

"They are a family, they are brothers. When someone dies, we make sure that the needs of his family are taken care of ... Not once did we treat (our men) as *bayaran* (for hire)."

The men receive at least P1,000 in monthly allowance each. They are also provided with food, education and medicines.

"If he wants to be a farmer, we buy him land and animals and support him. If he is capable of finishing engineering, then we send him to college and we pay for all his expenses," Ares said.

"When I send them to school, I also consider the needs of my town so they can come back and use what they have learned to serve our people," he added.

Bond among warlords

The officials said they gave their men opportunities to earn more by offering them to other politicians in need of extra guns.

Some of those who served during the elections came home P25,000 to P100,000 richer, they said.

Adolf said that he did not condone any wrongdoing by his men and he allowed authorities to do their job if his men were arrested for indiscriminately using their guns. But his men are given legal assistance, he said.

Adolf said he had a 20-year-old employee now in jail for killing the boyfriend of a girl the young man was courting.

But Ares claimed that no matter how bad people looked at them, his group had helped maintain peace and order in his town "because no one would kill without a valid reason."

"We never strike unless (our enemies) provoke us first," he said.

Tomorrow: Are private armies in Abra untouchable?

Guess who OKd bulldozing of 10,000 young trees in QC?

From page A1

adviser to President Macapagal-Arroyo, Defensor approved the development of a government property in Quezon City by a private contractor, whose crew recently bulldozed close to 10,000 tree saplings in a portion of the land used by the Manila Seedling Bank Foundation (MSBF).

That bulldozing incident on Aug. 23 outraged not only the foundation but also environment advocates—and became among the first issues to land on Defensor's lap upon his transfer last week to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

A day after the bulldozing incident, the MSBF filed a complaint of malicious mischief with the Quezon City police against the crew of the contractor, San Jose Builders Inc. (SJBI).

Defensor told reporters a few days before formally assuming his new post that the contractor might be required to "replace" the saplings if proven remiss in notifying the foundation of the clearing operation.

DEFENSOR: Past catches up with new DENR secretary.

GREEN activists stage rally at the Manila Seedling Bank in Quezon City to protest the bulldozing of young trees by a private contractor.

JOAN BONDOC

A document obtained by the INQUIRER showed that it was actually Defensor, then chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, who gave the go-signal two years ago for the SJBI to convert the idle 16-hectare property into a commercial area.

"In line with the National Housing Authority's project to undertake temporary use of the 16-ha area of the North Triangle property in Quezon City, the utilization of the same as vending area is hereby authorized," Defensor told SJBI owner Jerry Acuzar in a letter dated Dec. 16, 2002.

"In this regard, you are requested to proceed with the construction of the vending area on the mentioned property," he said.

The property near the corner of Edsa and Quezon City Avenue had been leased by the National Housing Authority to the SJBI.

A huge signboard in the area declares that it will be developed into bus bays and retail spaces to be collectively called the Central Terminal.

Private matter

In an interview with the INQUIRER yesterday, Defensor confirmed issuing the letter and smiled at the ironic turn of events.

He said that as far as the bulldozing incident was concerned, "the issue of damages is a private matter between Manila Seedling Bank and San Jose, because the foundation is operating as a business."

On the part of the DENR, it is still waiting for the police report on the exact damage done by the contractor's crew, Defensor said.

With the report, he said, the DENR "may require San Jose to conduct an urban greening program" in other areas in Metro Manila in a scale equivalent to the damaged trees.

MSBF president Chito Bertol had earlier said the foundation was not claiming the property but that it had been allowed by the NHA for the last 27 years to use a portion of it as an extension of the MSBF nursery.

Bertol complained in an interview that the foundation was "not given prior notice" when SJBI workmen started bulldozing the nursery area and destroyed 9,936 tree saplings worth P1.2 million.

He said the trees could have been saved.

Investigation

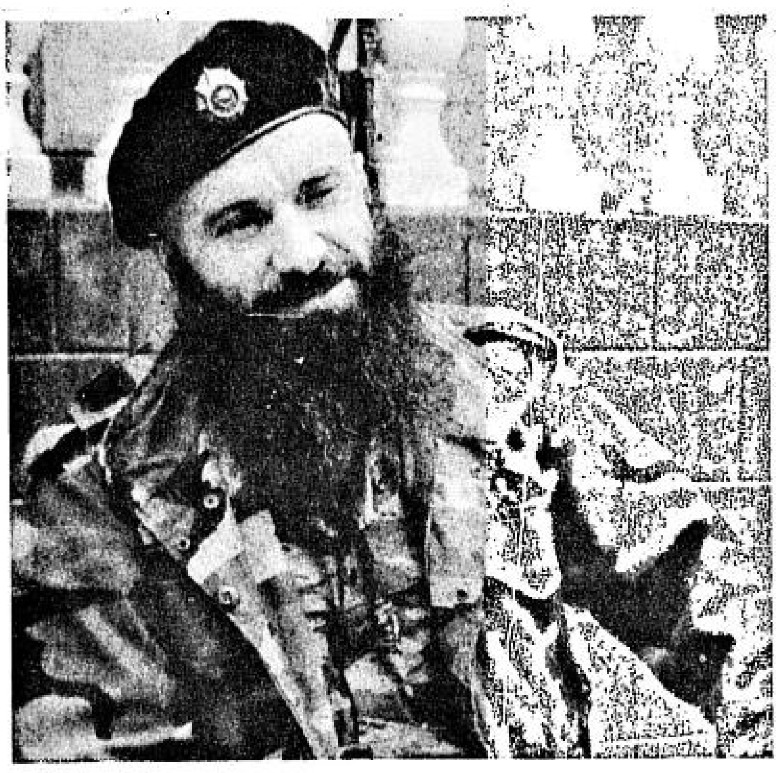
Environmentalists led by Odette Alcantara, along with opposition Sen. Jamby Madrigal, joined MSBF workers and officials yesterday in a rally condemning the bulldozing incident.

Madrigal said she had filed a resolution calling on Senate environment committee chair Pia Cayetano to launch an investigation and "act with deliberate dispatch" on this "crime against the environment."

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Video of Beslan hostages shocks Russia



CHECHEN rebel leader Shamil Basayev now has a $10-million price on his head. AFP

MOSCOW—Horrifying pictures of masked gunmen rigging a gym with explosives crammed with hundreds of terrified children sparked revulsion in Russia on Wednesday as authorities put a $10-million reward on the heads of two top Chechen leaders.

Russian television late Tuesday showed video footage of the scene inside the gym at the school in southern Beslan, which was seized a week ago by gunmen demanding independence for Chechnya.

"These people are animals," Olga Beovayeva, a 60-year-old, said in Beslan after seeing the images on Russia's NTV television network, as the death toll from the bloody standoff climbed to 336.

Russian authorities announced they would pay a 300-million-ruble ($10-million) reward for information leading to the "neutralization" of two top Chechen rebel leaders Aslan Maskhadov and Shamil Basayev.

The airing of the video footage came hours after an estimated 130,000 people rallied on a square beside the Kremlin in a government-approved demonstration against terror and in remembrance of the Beslan victims.

The 87-second tape showed hundreds of school children, parents and teachers packed into the North Ossetia school where they were seated on the gym floor in muted fear, many visibly sweating, as hostage-takers stood over them.

The video showed home-made bombs suspended from wires that ran the length of the gymnasium attached to two basketball hoops.

At one point, a masked man holding an automatic rifle was seen pointing forcefully to an object under his foot that looked like a book but that had wires running to it. A television commentator said it was a mine.

A young boy, hands on his head, cowered at the man's feet while in a darkened doorway a woman dressed all in black and wearing an explosive-packed suicide belt brandished a pistol.

"Do not bring in the children here yet," one man was heard yelling in accented Russian as another continued to string up wires and rig explosives in the gym, stepping amid streaks of blood on the floor.

The video images sparked a fierce reaction among Russians and the mood across the country on Wednesday, exactly a week after about 1,000 hostages were seized, was a mix of inconsolable grief and mounting rage.

"You can never forget this," said one woman in Beslan who would give her name only as Lisa. "How can you forget this when so many children died this way? They will be in our memory for years."

Russian news agencies that the Russian security service had put up a huge reward for information Maskhadov and Basayev.

Maskhadov served as president of Chechnya during a brief period of de facto independence in the second half of the 1990s, while Basayev is a noted rebel fighter who has claimed responsibility for many attacks against Russian troops.

Officials have accused both men of involvement in the Beslan school hostage-taking. Through a spokesperson, however, Maskhadov has denied any responsibility in the tragedy.

The news agencies said both men had been wanted for years in connection with various attacks in Russia and the Russian security service said it would guarantee anonymity and security of any informants on their whereabouts.

Russia's state prosecutor, Vladimir Ustinov, met with President Vladimir Putin to give him an update on the investigation into the tragedy, news agencies said. *AFP*

Massacre of children outrages Pope

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul II expressed outrage Wednesday over the killing of children in the Russian school hostage-taking, condemning "cruel fanaticism" and an "insane contempt" for their lives.

He said it was necessary to utter a "cry of pain" for all innocent children who are victims of the violence of adults.

The Pope had sent a condolence message to Russian authorities after a group of terrorists killed hundreds of children, parents and teachers in a school in North Ossetia last week, but his remarks at his weekly general audience marked the first time he had spoken out personally on the tragedy.

Noting that Wednesday marked the Catholic feast day of the Nativity of Mary, John Paul said "looking at the child Mary, how can one not think of so many defenseless little ones in Beslan in Ossetia, victims of a barbarous kidnapping and tragically killed?"

"They were inside a school, a place where one learns the values which give a sense to history, to culture and the civilization of peoples," he said. "Instead they experienced hate and death, dark consequences of a cruel fanaticism and insane contempt for the human person."

He said his thoughts went out to all suffering children.

"Children forced to carry arms and taught to hate and kill; children forced to beg in the streets, used for easy gain; children mistreated and humiliated by bullying and abuse by adults; children left to themselves, deprived of the warmth of a family and the prospect of a future; children who die of hunger, children killed in the many conflicts in various regions of the world." *AP*

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WORLDBRIEFS

China begins cleanup from floods

SHANGHAI—Rain-soaked residents of southwestern China began digging out on Wednesday after floods and landslides killed at least 161 people, while authorities warned of further rains over parts of the disaster area. Downpours stopped in Sichuan province's hard-hit Dazhou area, where the death toll stood at 89 with 41 missing and about 10,000 people sick and injured. In sprawling Chongqing municipality just east of Sichuan, 72 people were dead and 23 missing, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. However, meteorologists have warned that at least three major storms will strike in coming weeks. Authorities put the enormous Three Gorges hydroelectric project on alert as flood crests passed through the swollen Yangtze River. Navigation through the dam's locks was suspended. *AP*

Japan storm leaves 28 dead

TOKYO—Japan's coast guard on Wednesday found five more bodies from an Indonesian cargo ship that ran aground during a powerful typhoon that has hammered Japan, raising the death toll from the storm to at least 28. At least 15 others were missing. Public broadcaster NHK said 718 people had been injured, while police put the number at 498. The tropical storm, which was downgraded Wednesday from a typhoon after losing some of its devastating force, was centered at the northern tip of Hokkaido island and headed northwest with sustained winds of up to 108 kph. The typhoon carved a path of destruction Tuesday along the country's western coast, leaving about 1.6 million households without power, demolishing 27 homes and flooding 1,458 buildings, Japanese media said. *AP*

WHO alarmed by 1M suicides

GENEVA—Almost one million people kill themselves each year and the number, which exceeds the death toll from murder and war, is expected to hit 1.5 million by 2020, the World Health Organization said Wednesday. But suicide is largely preventable, through better surveillance of favorite methods—namely pesticides, guns and painkillers—and a greater focus on support groups, the UN health agency said. In a bid to raise awareness on the issue, the WHO and the International Association for Suicide Prevention will hold their second annual World Suicide Prevention Day on Friday. "Suicide is a tragic global public health problem," said Catherine Le Gales-Camus, WHO assistant director general for noncommunicable diseases and mental health. "Worldwide, more people die from suicide than from all homicides and wars combined. There is an urgent need for coordinated and intensified global action to prevent this needless toll," she said in a statement. *AFP*

New TVs zoom in for close-ups

TOKYO—Sony Corp. has developed a computer chip that allows viewers to zoom in on any part of a TV image, such as a favorite soccer player or an intruder on security-camera footage, while keeping the image sharp. In a demonstration on Wednesday, the Japanese electronics and entertainment giant showed its "Digital Reality Creation Multifunction v2"—a technology that allows users to pan around the TV image and then zoom in. A knob on a box attached to the TV adjusts the amount of zoom. In the demonstration, an image of sprawling terrain remained sharp enough while zooming in to show that a tiny speck was actually a man walking, and a dark spot in the river was a hippopotamus. *AP*

$1-M interview with Monica

SHANGHAI—Former presidential paramour Monica Lewinsky is planning a promotional tour in China for her 1999 book, "Monica's Story," and is demanding $1 million per media interview, the state press reported Wednesday. Lewinsky, 30, is expected to travel to China in mid-October for a tour that will also include Hong Kong and possibly Taipei in Taiwan, the Shanghai Morning Post reported. Her visit to Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, and Guangzhou in mainland China to promote the Chinese version of "Monica's Story" is set to coincide with the Chinese release of former US President Bill Clinton's autobiography "My Life." *AFP*

US military deaths in Iraq pass 1,000

BAGHDAD—A spate of attacks including a suicide car bombing pushed the number of US military deaths in the Iraq campaign past 1,000, with the majority inflicted by an insurgency that bloomed after US President George W. Bush declared major combat over.

Fighting with Sunni and Shiite insurgents killed eight Americans in the Baghdad area on Tuesday and Wednesday, pushing the count to 1,003. That number includes 1,000 US troops and three civilians, two working for the US Army and one for the Air Force. The tally was compiled by The Associated Press based on Pentagon records and AP reporting from Iraq.

US Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld cited progress on several fronts in the Bush administration's global war on terrorism and said US enemies should not underestimate the willingness of the American people and its coalition allies to suffer casualties in Iraq and elsewhere.

"The progress has prompted a backlash, in effect, from those who hope that at some point we might conclude that the pain and the cost of this fight isn't worth it," Rumsfeld told a Pentagon news conference. "Well, our enemies have underestimated our country, our coalition. They have failed to understand the character of our people. And they certainly misread our commander in chief."

The Bush administration has long linked the Iraq conflict to the war on terrorism. The Sept. 11 Commission, however, concluded that Iraq and al-Qaida did not have a "collaborative relationship" before the 2001 attacks on New York and Washington, and some have questioned to what extent foreign terror groups are involved in the anti-US insurgency in Iraq.

Democratic presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry issued a statement saying the United States joined the friends and families of those who died in mourning their loss.

"Today marks a tragic milestone in the war in Iraq. More than 1,000 of America's sons and daughters have made the ultimate sacrifice. Our nation honors their service and joins with their families and loved ones in mourning their loss," Kerry said.

"We must never forget the price they have paid. And we must meet our sacred obligation to all our troops to do all we can to make the right decisions in Iraq so that we can bring them home as soon as possible."

The 1,003 figure includes deaths from hostile and nonhostile causes since the United States launched the Iraq campaign in March 2003 to topple Saddam Hussein's regime. All but 138 of the US deaths came after Bush's May 1, 2003 declaration of an end to major combat operations after Saddam fell.

The US military has not reported overall Iraqi deaths. The Iraqi health ministry started counting the dead only in April when heavy fighting broke out in Fallujah and Najaf. However, conservative estimates by private groups place the Iraqi toll at least 10,000—or 10 times the number of US military deaths.

"It is difficult to establish the right number of casualties," said Amnesty International's Middle East spokesperson, Nicole Choueiry. She added that "it was the job of the occupation power to keep track of the numbers but the Americans failed to do so." *AP*

Kidnapping of 2 Italian aid workers condemned

ROME—With the country outraged over the kidnapping of two female aid workers, Pope John Paul II led prayers for their release Wednesday and Premier Silvio Berlusconi urged a united front against terrorism.

Simona Pari and Simona Torretta, 29, were seized from their offices in central Baghdad after an attack by a group in of armed men in olive-green uniforms. Two Iraqis, a man and a woman, were also kidnapped in the raid.

Torretta and Pari worked for an aid agency called "Un Ponte Per..." ("A Bridge To...") and were involved in school and water projects.

"They are not in Baghdad by chance, for money or adventure, but to bring concrete aid to an afflicted population," Corriere della Sera wrote Wednesday.

The kidnapping deals "a low blow to Italy in order to force it to leave the country; it is a slap in the face of the system of unarmed humanitarian aid," said another Italian daily, the Rome-based Il Messaggero.

"Un Ponte Per..." was critical of Berlusconi's support of the US-led invasion in Iraq, and the two women were described in news reports as pacifists. Italy has 3,500 troops in Iraq, which were sent in after the ouster of Saddam Hussein.

The kidnapping was condemned by all politicians, and the two blocs vowed to unite against terrorism.

"We are ready to cooperate with the government and the institutions to save these two brave women," said opposition leader Francesco Rutelli. *AP*

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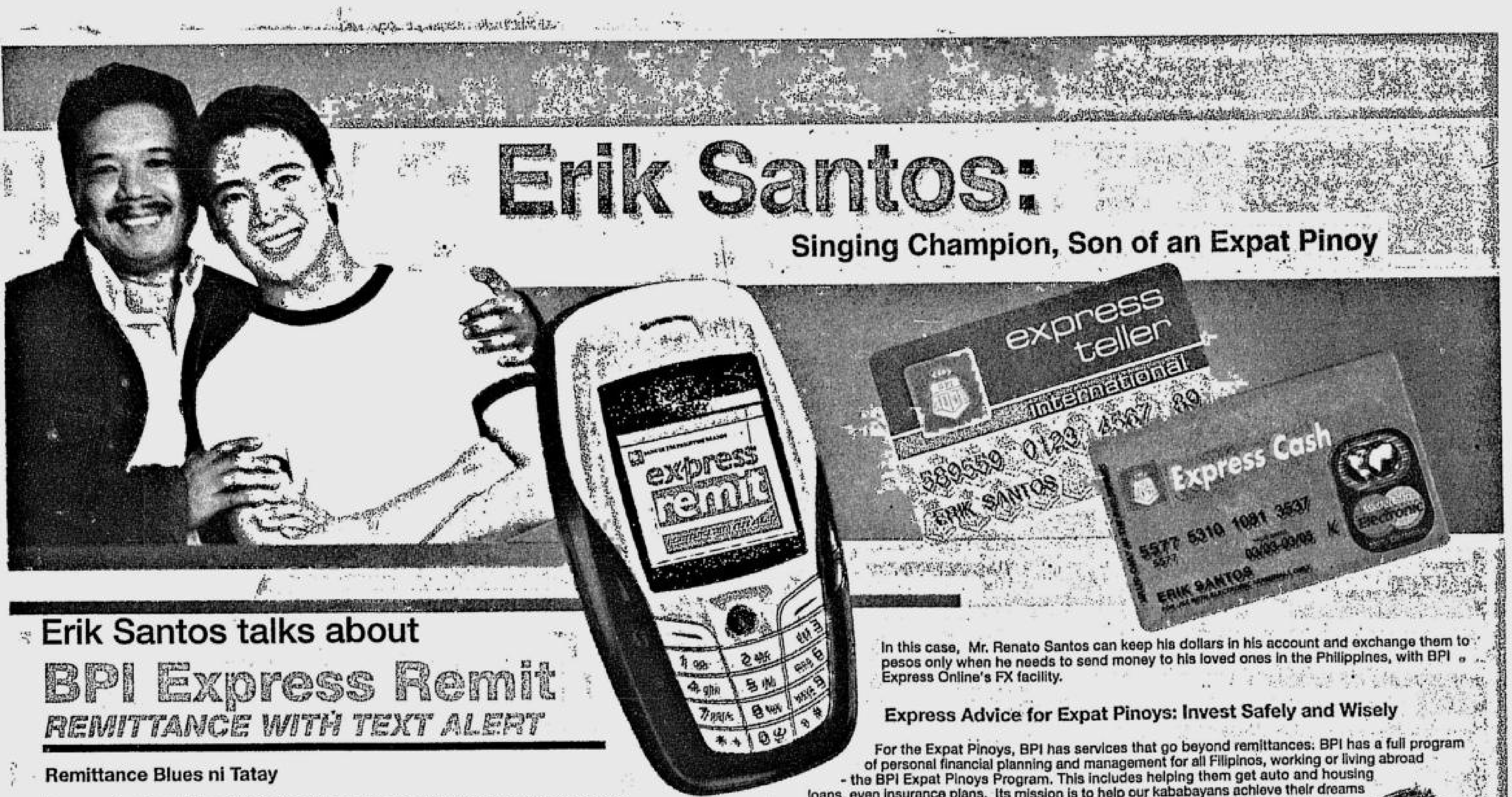

Erik Santos talks about
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Remittance Blues ni Tatay

As a son of an Expat Pinoy, Erik Santos understands the difficulties in sending remittance from abroad. Erik relates that while his Tatay sends regular remittances, his mother does not always get them on time, "kaya't hirap na hirap si Nanay".

"Dahil po siguro sa delay in processing ng mga remittance or money transfer companies dahil pasalin-salin ang pera bago makarating sa amin", opines Erik.

"Kaya nga po malaking bagay ngayon na may serbisyong BPI Express Remit. Sa simpleng steps 1-2-3, madali kay Tatay magpadala at lalong madali rin para sa amin matanggap ang perang padala.

Higit sa lahat, BPI pa mismo ang magte-text kay Tatay at sa amin ni Nanay na dumating na ang padala, at puwede nang ma-withdraw sa BPI Express Teller ATMs, kahit anong oras at araw."

"Iba Pa Rin Talaga Pag Bangko, Gaya ng BPI"

"Eh, business po talaga nila yan, eh, lalo pa BPI", says Erik.

To Erik and Nanay, "malaking bagay na walang pag-aalala sa tuwing magpapadala ng pera si Tatay."

BPI recently introduced Express Remit, its on-line, real time remittance facility with text alert. As soon as the remitter sends money through any BPI Express Remit Centers and its affiliated tie-up companies, BPI sends the remitter and his beneficiary a text alert telling them that funds have been credited to their account and that the money can now be withdrawn in any of BPI's more than 1,200 ATMs nationwide, any time, any day, whether you have a BPI Express Teller ATM card or the Express Cash card.

The text alert is free of charge and can be received through any cellphone network provider.

Doing it the Express Online Way

"Sabi ko nga rin po kay Tatay, mag-enrol kami sa BPI Express Online. Kung mabilis na ang Express Remit, mas mabilis pa ang remittance kung funds transfer from Tatay's BPI Express Teller Account to my Express Teller account.

Yung dollar na kinikita ni Tatay, puwede niyang ilipat from his BPI Express Teller Dollar Savings Account to my BPI Peso Express Teller Account, on-line, real time. Malaki pa ang palitan ng dollar to peso sa BPI Express Online," Erik continues.

In this case, Mr. Renato Santos can keep his dollars in his account and exchange them to pesos only when he needs to send money to his loved ones in the Philippines, with BPI Express Online's FX facility.

Express Advice for Expat Pinoys: Invest Safely and Wisely

For the Expat Pinoys, BPI has services that go beyond remittances: BPI has a full program of personal financial planning and management for all Filipinos, working or living abroad - the BPI Expat Pinoys Program. This includes helping them get auto and housing loans, even insurance plans. Its mission is to help our kababayans achieve their dreams and aspirations - the very reasons for which they leave the country in search of the proverbial greener pasture in a foreign land.

"Kaya ang advice ko sa mga beneficiaries ng Expat Pinoy, ikuwento sa inyong mga kapamilya sa abroad na mag-BPI Express Remit na sila."

"Buti na lang, may bangkong tulad ng BPI ngayon. May siguradong [illegible] sa mga Expat Pinoys na tulad ni Tatay upang maabot din nila ang [illegible] mga pangarap." Erik ends.

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OPINION

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Death by madness

EDITORIAL

IT WAS a particularly horrific scene in this country that does not lack in horror. A man, his year-old baby in his arms, clambers atop a steel footbridge like one deranged, roosts there in the searing heat, occasionally swings wild-eyed from perch to perch, and, after more than an hour, leaps to the ground, killing the child and maiming himself on impact. His injuries are exacerbated by an angry crowd that besets him. Later removed from the scene and flat on his back in a hospital (but apparently quite willing to indulge a TV reporter), the father admits to no remorse.

Early on in the apparently unemployed Nestor Silang's perverse adventure last week, it was widely speculated that he was in the throes of drugs. Indeed, media reports alleged so—perhaps because of the notion that bizarre behavior like his can only be explained by a chemically induced "madness." (As an observer had commented, poverty and drugs make for a lethal combination.) But TV reports quoted Silang in the hospital as denying having been under the influence. It's possible that he was lying through his teeth, but by that claim, he presumably meant to say he was in possession of his faculties when he took his son and namesake on the fatal climb, and no imagined demons pushed him to do the deed.

Silang's wife—pegged by reports at age 35 but looking much older, and marked by an oddly quiet demeanor, as though she were (or perhaps she is) restraining a savage force within—has since filed a case of parricide. But until he is actually convicted and thrown in jail, the chance of his being pronounced insane—and consequently escaping physical liability for what he has done—is great.

It remains unclear what exactly the purportedly sober Silang meant to achieve. Presumably, to kill himself and his son as a means of escaping a life of misery. But in so public a manner, in broad daylight, complicated by TV cameras and a howling crowd? Perhaps it was more to claim the mythical 15 minutes of fame (not that he had the wherewithal to quote Warhol), as indicated by his readiness, despite his certain pain, to speak into the microphone thrust into his bandaged face, in a tone as though he had yet to—or maybe could not—comprehend what he had done.

What Silang did is not unheard-of. Once upon a time in this metropolis of our afflictions, a vagrant who could not stand his hungry son's cries beat the boy's head on the pavement over and over until the wailing stopped. There were few witnesses to the crime. And live TV action was not in vogue then.

It cannot be ascertained if Silang was seized by the same, or at least comparable, level of desperation. How, after all, does one measure despair?

But no less liable are the Quezon City authorities who appeared to have done nothing to prevent the child's terrible extinction despite the eternity that elapsed between the start of Silang's climb and his shocking leap. Watching the TV coverage, the observer flinching at the height of the father's possible plunge and the prospect of the boy's doom could also note the gawking crowd and the general bedlam below. There appeared to have been no effective crowd control and no skilled intervention by way of trained personnel to negotiate with the father for the child's safety.

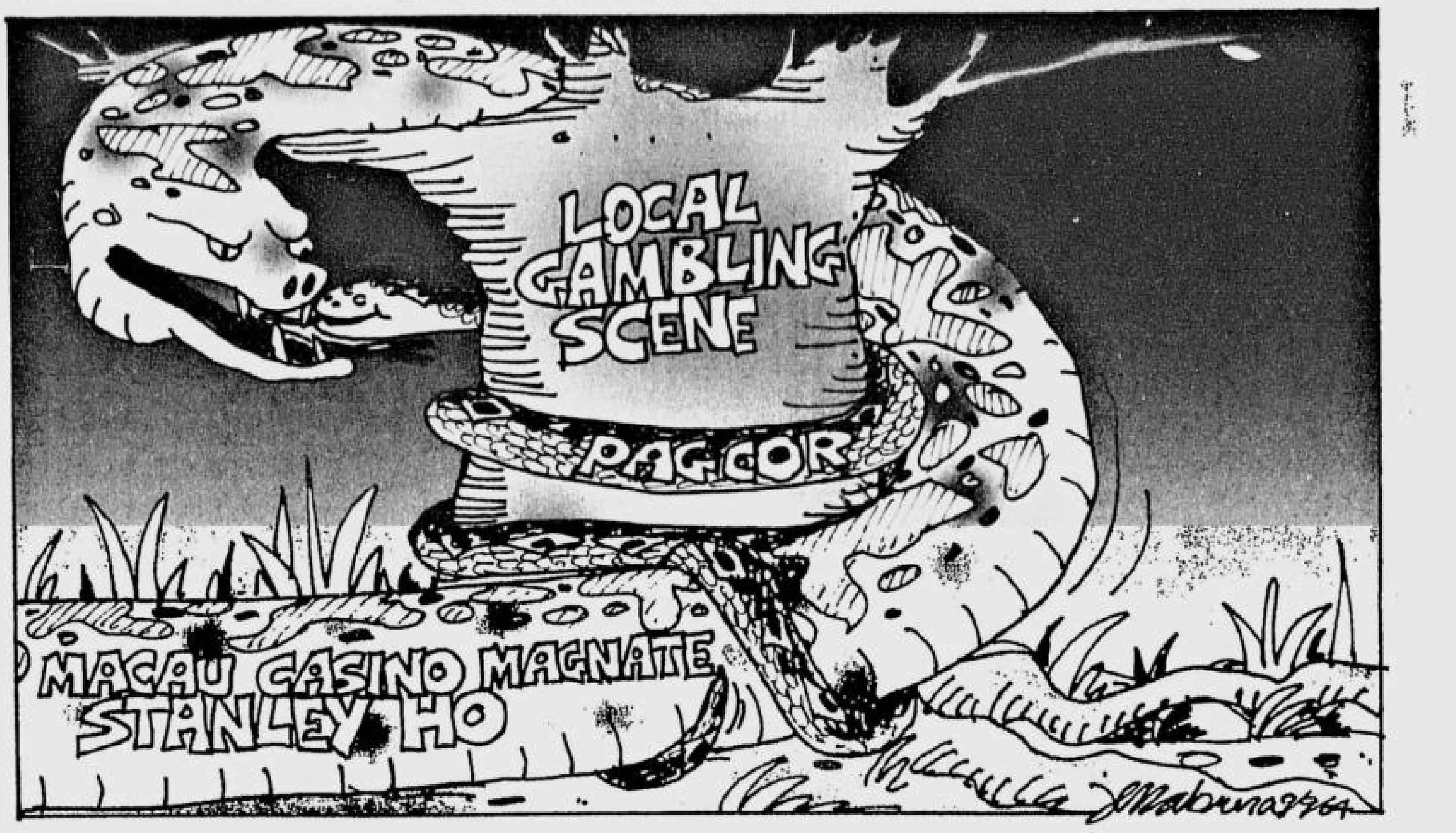
And to think that authorities have had similar incidents to draw valuable lessons from.

It was only in May 2002 that four-year-old Dexter Balala died in the arms of a man who had held him hostage for two hours in a Pasay City bus terminal. Diomedes Talvo, obviously anguished and unhinged, had seized the boy from his mother at knife point and nicked and ultimately repeatedly stabbed him as police opened fire.

It was a crazed conclusion of a pre-dawn crime that had all the marks of police bungling, down to an unruly crowd, aggressive TV crews, maddening lights, absolutely no one equipped to speak with the hostage-taker in his language, and a coterie of cops that fired their guns with no consideration of the young, shrieking hostage. In the end, the autopsy revealed that the child bore not only five stab wounds but also four gunshot wounds.

The offshoot of that hostage drama was that the 341 members of the Pasay police force were ordered to undergo a 20-day training session in hostage crisis management. As many as 21 officers were slapped criminal and administrative charges.

And that was only two years ago. Expect more of the same in this seeming downward spiral of madness.



State visit shivers (2)

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

BEFORE FERNANDO Poe Jr.'s presidential campaign fell apart, people broke into cold sweat over his "inevitable" election. The INQUIRER and Cebu Daily News published our March 23 tongue-in-cheek column, on how "Da King" and China's president would chat in a piece titled "State visit shivers."

President Macapagal-Arroyo recently returned from Beijing—into a political buzz-saw. Acceptance of a Chinese invitation for her family obscured her "achievements," Malacañang complained. Here's an equally fictional "State visit shivers 2."

After inspecting the honor guards, GMA and President Hu Jintao (HJ) meet. Here's their imaginary dialogue:

HJ: Welcome, Madame President. All roads lead to Beijing, the Chinese proverb says.

GMA: Thank you, Mr. President. My official team is ready to work. But we're few in number because of a cash flow problem back home. Not all taxes collected go to government. So, we've called for "voluntary austerity." Your invitation, nonetheless, enabled my children, grandchildren, *yayas*—what's the Mandarin word for nannies?—to come. Oh, yes, the First Gentleman, too. Sorry for that oversight.

HJ: We're happy your family came, Madame. "Filial piety moves heaven and earth," my grandmother used to say. China also has tax problems, despite showcase cities like Shanghai and $46 billion in foreign investments in 2002 alone.

In 1978, our tax receipts were 31 percent of GDP. By 1999, this slumped to 14 percent. Most worrisome is the massive diversion of taxes away from the official budget. You call that "unprogrammed expenditures" in the Philippines?

GMA: Hmmm. Sounds more like pork barrel. That exploded from P12.5 million in 1990 to P65 million now for every congressman. There's P200 million for each senator.

Walang hindi nabibighani, kapag ang salapi ay kumakalansing, we say back home. When money jingles, everyone is attracted. In fact, our Marxist party-list congressmen slurp at the pork trough with capitalist gusto.

HJ: Really? "A hundred taels will move heaven itself," Madame. In the mid-'90s, our off-budget diversions exceeded budgeted tax revenue by two to one. Large amounts are stashed away in slush funds. Local officials have near-total discretion over government spending. They do little to improve schools, health care or the environment.

"Those who prosper do not argue about taxes," we Chinese say. But massive corruption results. Our National Auditing Agency—the counterpart of your COA—found that 10 out of every 100 yuan, collected in taxes, were siphoned away. Is it true that 40 centavos out of every peso are pocketed by your grafters?

GMA: "The greedy choke easily," they say in Bohol. That's a province like your native Anhui. But how does this system affect your local governments? The China scholar Minxin Pei claims that the most worrisome source of unrest is "the onerous tax burden levied on China's most impoverished citizens."

HJ: When tax systems fail, governance deficits result in three critical areas: mustering political support; providing public goods; dampening internal tensions. Collapse becomes possible. The University of the Philippines scholars correctly warn that you have little time left to correct course.

China's fiscal system is also dysfunctional. Local finance, specially in rural interior provinces like Hunan, is crumbling. About 40 percent of our counties can pay only half their bills.

Growing demand for services and bloated bureaucracies force many townships into debt. Hunan's debts, for example, equal half its income. Like your Cebu City, no? Almost a quarter of its budget go to payment of yen-loan interest. And your government-controlled corporations have runaway debts. But "he who restrains his appetite avoids debt."

GMA: I'll tell Mayor Tomas Osmeña that when I visit Cebu. So, must we reform flawed fiscal systems at the top and overhaul local governments at the bottom without delay?

HJ: We have no choice, Madame. Can we meet the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of people living in poverty (a dollar or P56 a day) by 2015?

China did "a remarkable job in reducing extreme poverty," the Asian Development Bank says in its study, "Poverty In Asia." But "more than 200 million can still be counted among the extremely poor in that country." That's like two and a half Philippines.

In rural China, friction between state and the peasantry is rising. Collective protests quadrupled from 8,700 in 1993 to over 32,000. They stem from our transition from class struggle to economic growth, and regressive taxes.

The Communist Party's structure has decayed. In 2000, the party did not have a single member in 86 percent of the country's private firms. A survey of 818 migrant laborers in Beijing showed the image of the ruling party was that of a self-serving elite.

GMA: Your New People's Army comrades fan unrest back home. What do we do?

HJ: We must reread Confucius. "An effective government must have sufficient food, sufficient weapons, and confidence of common people," the Sage wrote.

"But if one must be dispensed with, which should it be?" the disciple asked.

"Weapons," he answered.

"But what if two must be abandoned?" the disciple persisted.

"Let the food go," replied the Master. "For from of old, death has been the lot of all men. But if the people have no confidence in the government, the state cannot stand."

Enough. Time for lunch.

* * *

E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph

Still, Isle of Tortuga

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I DID see one unpleasant thing in the stalls that sold pirated DVDs in Quiapo last weekend. That was the presence among them of local titles. In the past, I used to see only movies starring Sharon Cuneta, Judy Ann Santos (I think) and various action ones. This time I saw Gil Portes' "A Beautiful Life" and Joel Lamangan's "Mano Po" and "Pamilya." "Imelda" was there as well, except that, as the vendors tipped, "it wasn't DVD yet, just a clear copy." I don't know what other Filipino movies are sold there. They weren't in all the stalls, only in some of them.

I draw the line at buying local stuff. That has been my policy all this time, and that has been the policy I've recommended to government all this time. That was the advice I gave Tito Sotto a couple of years ago when he asked to meet with me on the subject. He was then head of the Senate committee on intellectual property rights, which covered piracy. I said the only rational policy was to stop the pirating of local movies and CDs. You cannot stop piracy completely, that is a hopeless cause. The technology is there. You can no more bind the explosion in productive capabilities to old property rights than you can cage King Kong in the zoo. But you can at least curb, if not stop, the pirating of local movies and CDs.

You can do that by running only after those who sell pirated local movies and CDs. I'm sure you can appeal to the public's patriotic sentiments to not buy the pirated local stuff. I'm just as sure you won't find resistance, or cynical reaction, to cops swooping down on the pirates' lair and carting off bundles of pirated local movies and CDs. The public might even applaud them.

The justification for such a policy should be national interest and not moral scruple. The reason is simple: You make moral scruple the basis for running after people selling, or buying, pirated movies and music CDs, you have to run as well after those selling, or buying, pirated software. It's the same principle.

But you do the latter and the country will grind to a halt. The educational system will grind to a halt, the banks and courts will grind to a halt, the entire government will grind to a halt. That is because easily 99 percent of the computers in this country use pirated operating systems and pirated programs.

That includes the computers of the entertainers who are fulminating against piracy. That includes the computers of Bong Revilla, ex-Videogram Regulatory Board head and current senator, and Edu Manzano, ex-TV host and current board head. The day they are able to show their press statements are written on licensed Microsoft Word from computers booted with licensed Windows XP is the day I join their crusade without reservation. Otherwise, they're just being hypocrites.

Sotto's office did call me a couple of years ago to say a bill incorporating my suggestions (making the pirating of local movies and CDs, on ground of national interest, illegal and punishable by law) was being prepared. I don't know if it was ever finished, if it got to the floor of the Senate, or if it met with furious opposition from various lobbies. But clearly it hasn't been enacted, freeing Manzano to mount his movie antics in real life.

It is the only reasonable policy toward "piracy"—which I put in quotation marks because the GATT-WTO concept of intellectual property rights is itself piratical; at least the pirates of Tortuga stole from the rich, this one steals from the poor. More so now than ever. There are two new and compelling reasons why this is so.

The first is that the selling of pirated DVDs gives livelihood to the ragged urban denizens who might otherwise take to crime—this is not so, to anticipate the snide remarks of Bill Gates' representatives on earth—to bring food to the table. That is no mean feat particularly in these days of great want, and coming days of even greater want. The last thing we need is to add more unemployment to the country, particularly among the ranks of the Muslim poor in Metro Manila, who for some reason seem to have monopolized the retail trade in pirated DVDs. It's not a matter of preference, it's a matter of survival.

In fact, the last thing we need is government using our taxes to keep an office that exists to protect foreign interests. I don't mind that the portion of my pay I am forced to part with goes to supporting local artists, I do mind that it goes to protecting Paramount and 20th Century Fox.

The second is that, well, do you want to keep this country ignorant? Education is its own justification. The United States itself did not mind pirating British books to enlighten its nationals before 1776. If it hadn't done so, it might still be a British colony. I personally do not mind being reproduced all over the place (which I am), if that will improve people's minds. I'm shareware entirely, the spirit that happily still rules the Internet.

The explosion in DVD titles, which now include Hollywood classics as well as movies from other countries, is particularly welcome. My own take there is that this should help the more serious makers of local movies by enlarging the scope of their market. Currently, they have to cater to a market whose taste has been molded by Hollywood "blockbusters" and B action movies. The availability of the classic movies should raise the Filipino taste several notches higher, which should boost the chances of the Lino Brockas and Ishmael Bernals of this country peddling their wares.

Bong Revilla was just lucky, there is no political future in raiding the lost ark. Edu Manzano should really stop to think before he makes his next move. Or he may end up at the receiving end of his favorite barb in "Weakest Link." Which is: "Goodbye."

Praying for GMA's resolve

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo said at the recent Manila Overseas Press Club forum that she will be a "non-political president" who will take on "entrenched interests" and make tough and bold decisions even if they are unpopular, in order to "move this nation forward." We citizens can only say amen to that, and hope she will really do as she says, for the sake of the country. We wish the President the best and pray that she be strengthened in that resolve, for so much will depend on it. In this, she needs the support of every citizen.

* * *

I must confess that certain developments in GMA's first term and in this new one have made me a bit less optimistic about her resolve. Media openly spoke in the past term about certain political concessions GMA made to powerful groups in the firing of some officials serving her. In the past, she was also perceived as overstretching the limits of her patience with some political allies in sensitive positions. All these, however, were charged to her understandable ambition for 2004.

During her regular term, citizens hope there would be no more accommodations, but the perception is that it's still there. For instance, it's easy to see that her appointment of Joseph Durano as tourism secretary, over the protest of former DOT secretaries, was a concession to the powerful Cebuano dynasty to which he belongs. Then, too, the perception is that some powerful groups with their own agenda continue to lord it over in Malacañang, and these include civil society leaders, the scion of a wealthy Mindanao family with vast businesses, and influential lawyers with questionable agendas. Let's hope and pray for the sake of the country that the President will now put them all in their place.

* * *

The Palace appears quite determined to cut operating costs. For one thing, it shuts off air-conditioning units in various offices during the lunch hour and from 4 p.m. onwards. The idea is to let personnel take a breather outside during the lunch break and make them go home early in the afternoon. But I'm not sure whether this is the most sensible option. There are those who want to work through lunch or after 5 p.m., but the heat makes it difficult, affecting productivity. There may be better ways for government to cut cost, such as a stricter monitor of bidding and procurement procedures, cutting down on anniversary celebrations and expensive press briefings, and trimming down receptions for visiting officials in the provinces. For instance, why should the officials of some offices be given one car each during provincial visits? Couldn't they all ride a coaster to save money?

But in case the Palace doesn't change its mind about shutting down the air-cons, I suggest the affected personnel just open their windows wide and bring electric fans to the office. They help.

* * *

Tomorrow, Sept. 10, Alay sa Kawal (ASK) Foundation marks its anniversary as a full-blown debutante, with a thanksgiving celebration to be held at the AFP Officers' Club in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City, at 10 a.m., with Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz as speaker. Cruz is expected to explain how he plans to forge a new partnership between civilians and the military, for the sake of the soldiers' widows and orphans, who are among the most deprived sectors of society. A highlight of the celebration is the distribution of checks to soldiers' beneficiaries by Cruz to be assisted by AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya.

* * *

Right after the Edsa Revolution, a group of professionals, including this columnist, got together to form ASK as a civilian response to the challenge of President Cory Aquino for civil society to reconcile with the "new" Armed Forces. Since then ASK, led by lawyers Edgardo Espiritu, now our ambassador to London, and Ramon Pedrosa, as our chair and president, respectively, has undertaken various programs to help the dependents of soldiers either killed or completely disabled in combat. Foremost among these is the extension of financial assistance to beneficiary families. Each family gets only P20,000, but this has helped over 3,000 bereaved families during a most difficult stage in the past 18 years.

Another program is "Doktor para sa Kawal," where ASK, using seed money provided by President Arroyo two years ago, funds the studies of medical students who will serve in the military after graduation. Still, another program provides scholarships to dependents of soldiers and civilian employees of the military, in coordination with the College Assurance Plan.

As members of the board of the oldest NGO dedicated exclusively to the common soldiers' welfare, we are very proud of ASK's track record and pledge to improve it in the coming years.

* * *

Erda corner: **Earlier I wrote about seven students (among the 400) studying at Erda Technical-Vocational High School who remain unsponsored (P25,000 per student), and published the profiles of two of them. A Chinese-Filipino businessman responded immediately and sent a check for two students, as a way of commemorating the death anniversary of his father-in-law. *Salamat po.***

Five other students need sponsors. One is sophomore Rene de Leon, 14, who comes from a broken family. His father does not send financial assistance anymore because he has a new family. Rene lives with an aunt who earns a little from food vending. He tries to help by collecting and selling tin cans. Rene plans to train as an electrician at Erda Tech.

Sophomore Abbigade Salem, 13, is the second of three children, whose father derives irregular income from selling mechanical accessories, while his mother accepts laundry jobs. They live with relatives near Erda Tech and Abbigade promised his parents he will work right after graduating so that he can help them. Call Erda Tech at 564-2608 and 564-1774.

'Bantay riles'

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

SO what is everybody waiting for, the President wanted to know.

There's no stopping the North Rail project, we are told, and I couldn't help thinking of "The Runaway Train," the 1988 bone-rattling movie that left viewers breathless and all shook up.

Ten hours after she returned from her state visit to China, President Macapagal-Arroyo expressed impatience over the slowness of the North Rail project that would span the Manila-Clark (Pampanga) distance. Actual work on the ground has yet to start. China had already released the $400 million for the first phase that would connect Manila to Malolos, Bulacan.

Ms Arroyo's trip to China had a lot to do with this project. China's Eximbank has also approved the second phase. During her *pulong bayan* held at the Cubao LRT station, the President, reports said, was impatience personified. She even called for North Rail president Jose Cortez Jr. who was having coffee in another LRT platform. Start the project now, she ordered. The reports didn't say if Cortez spilled his coffee and got scalded.

The Strong Republic Transit System is one of the President's flagship infrastructure projects meant to boost economic growth and employment. Who does not want to have a modernized railway system that would get people and products faster to their destinations and minus the hassle of road travel? Who does not want a clean, well lighted train speeding with a humming sound, minus garbage bags piling on its roof?

But wait. How do you uproot the tens of thousands of families living along the railroad tracks? Most motorists see them only on the periphery of their vision as they cross the tracks. If you are on a helicopter you'd have a better view of the colonies clustered on both sides of the tracks.

Many would probably ask, how in heaven's name did homes proliferate in these dangerous areas? Dangerous is an understatement. Many homes are a foot away from the tracks. A few months ago, I did a two-part series on the dangers of living along the *riles*. I interviewed some survivors of train hits and I couldn't help thinking that it seems a miracle that the number of casualties is not bigger than what is listed.

Riles denizens are a death-defying breed indeed. Why, they've even invented the foot-propelled trolley that runs on the tracks and ferries passengers from one point to another.

But the question now is not how communities grew along the tracks. The question now is how to uproot them from there, how to relocate them in a manner that is humane. Some 35,000 families are going to be affected by the North Rail project alone. The south is another story. From the north to the south there are about 70,000 *riles* families.

Relocation does not mean dislocation in the physical sense only. There are psychological, socio-cultural and emotional factors that have to be considered. A whole way of life is going to vanish, hopefully to be replaced by a better one. But what if life gets worse before it gets better? Must the poorest go through a worst phase?

This is the issue that Representatives Mario Aguja, Ana Theresia Hontiveros-Baraquel and Loretta Ann Rosales of Akbayan want to address. They recently filed House Resolution 165 directing the committees on housing and urban development and on civil, political and human rights "to investigate the North Rail and South Manila Commuter Rail rehabilitation projects and their effects on the residents living in areas adjacent to the railway tracks." Fourteen other representatives co-authored the resolution, among them, Alan Peter Cayetano, Roilo Golez, Reylina Nicolas, Miles Roces, Luis Asistio and Eduardo Zialcita. They cited Article XIII of the Constitution that says that "urban or rural poor dwellers shall not be evicted nor their dwellings demolished, except in accordance with law and in a just and humane manner." The Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992 also prescribes for a "just and humane eviction."

Because of the great number to be affected by the railway rehab projects, Aguja, Hontiveros-Baraquel and Rosales are calling on government agencies concerned to present to Congress and to the public their concrete resettlement plans. These agencies are the Philippine National Railways, National Economic and Development Authority, Department of Transportation and Communication, Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, National Housing Authority, project proponent North Luzon Railways Corp. The local governments, too.

Where are the resettlement sites for the families to be affected? What are the social preparations being made? Have public consultations been conducted? What are the timetables?

What is the budget, what are the sources of funds for this massive resettlement operation? What are the lead implementing agencies that will assure that the process complies with laws and respects human rights?

Aguja has recommended that lawmakers from districts to be affected set aside part of their pork barrel for the *riles* dwellers' resettlement. He has also commended the efforts of Bantay Riles, a new coalition of organizations monitoring the railway projects.

The north's first phase will be 32.2 km. The total project cost is $503 million. It will have four stations located in Caloocan, Valenzuela, Marilao, Bocaue, Guiguinto and Malolos.

Phase 2 will be a branch line to Subic. Phase 3 will connect Caloocan to Fort Bonifacio Global City. Phase 4 goes all the way to San Fernando, La Union. Partial operation is scheduled in 2006, project completion in 2007.

Bantay Riles is watching. I hope church groups would do the same. Yes, the bulldozers are sure to come.

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

Concern for the flag

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

I'M giving way today to a letter writer, Gerry Quisumbing, who sent me two letters which I'd like to quote.

On Aug. 30, he sent me this letter:

"This is my first time to write a letter to the Philippine Daily Inquirer. I chose your e-mail address because about a few months back I had the chance to watch you on TV wherein you made a historical commentary about our Philippine flag. I feel that since my e-mail is quite related to this subject, you might give some attention to it. Besides, I also like reading your column and perhaps you could relay this e-mail to any organization that is involved in promoting the proper observation of our national flag.

"I hope that by the time you read this, the government agency concerned has already addressed the simple request which I relayed through text messages to TEXTGMA last week. I also sent several text messages to the various TV and print media outfits about two weeks ago regarding this matter.

"While TEXTGMA and the media outfits acknowledged my text messages, no concrete action has been taken up to now. The lukewarm response that I got could be their way of saying that my request is not urgent and I am making a big fuss out of nothing. Nevertheless, allow me to share the subject of my letter to you. If you feel the same way, then I will respect your opinion because you are an authority on this matter.

"The issue that I am bringing to your attention is about the symbol of our Republic: the Philippine flag. Members of my generation (those who are now in their 50s) have been trained to regard the flag as very sacred and worthy of respect. We honor the flag as a symbol of our national pride and unity as a people. We honor the flag because it reminds us of the patriotism of thousands of our countrymen who fought and died to defend it.

"Unfortunately many government officials don't seem to share this view if you consider how the Philippine Flag is being desecrated near the newly constructed Libis flyover. If you go to Makati through C5, you will see two very tattered and three very dirty and worn-out Philippine flags tied to the lampposts near the foot of the newly opened Libis flyover.

"These flags are probably remnants of the many Philippine flags that were placed to decorate the lampposts during our Independence Day celebration. Many of these flags have already been removed, but for whatever reason, these five flags have remained. Since they are made of cheap fabric material, they therefore have deteriorated over time. While it is true that these flags are made of cheap fabric, they nevertheless symbolize our country and should be respected and not be left to the elements.

"Allowing these tattered and worn-out flags to remain on the lampposts is a disgrace and a desecration. Have we lost pride in our flag? How can we build a strong republic when we do not honor its symbol? I suppose many of our countrymen, politicians, generals and ordinary citizens have noticed these flags. How come nothing was done to remove them? Why the utter indifference when those who have the authority can just order a metro aide to remove them?

"The utter indifference of our government officials indicates that we have lost our sense of patriotism and national pride. If we cannot display our flags properly then we should remove them. Better yet, if we still have some national pride, we should replace them with new ones.

"If we are allowed to philosophize, could our disrespect to our flag be a major reason for our debacle in the recent Olympics? There is no doubt that our athletes trained very hard to win an Olympic medal and bring honor to country. However they were not successful. Could it be possible that we as a people are cursed? With the shabby way we treat and honor our national flag right here in our own country, we do not deserve to win an Olympic medal and wave our flag in victory. Perhaps the muses of the Olympic games wanted to spare us from becoming hypocrites."

The letter was followed by another sent last Monday:

"By the way, I passed by the new Libis-Rosario flyover to find out if the flags are still there. Yes, they are still there. This only shows that as far as Malacañang, the MMDA and the City of Pasig is concerned, removing them is not worth their time.

"Allowing these flags to continue flying is disgusting. Maybe our government officials have become so callous that they do not consider the shameful display of our national flag a sacrilege. This lack of respect is an insult and dishonor to our countrymen who died defending it.

"...While it is true that the flags near the flyover are made of cheap fabric, they still represent our flag and should be honored and respected accordingly.

"Once in a while during a TV break, one would see the TV channels featuring a government ad about our flag. Watching our national flag waving proudly under a deep blue sky is undoubtedly a very uplifting sight.

"Unfortunately in many instances this sight is not duplicated in real life. In fact, I have not noticed any public clamor to penalize public or private officials who allow the improper display of our national flag. Where are the militant groups and civil society?

"As a national symbol, our flag is the heart and soul of our republic. For as long as we continue to desecrate it, PGMA's vision of a Strong Republic will not become a reality. Our indifference to the way our national flag is being desecrated speaks volumes that we have not caught her vision. Perhaps this is due to the fact that up to now her officials still do not know how to lead by example.

"If only our leaders could learn how to walk the talk."

* * *

Comments welcome at www.quezon.ph

My hero

YOUNG BLOOD

Chinie Canivel

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

THIS story is not about me. This story is about a hero—my hero.

Heroes come in different forms. Many people think "big and strong" when they hear the word "hero." Others think of sage intellectuals who write inspiring novels and propound ideologies, or kindly old men and women who dedicate their lives to the poor.

My hero came in the form of a baby born on June 22, 1997 with a hole in his heart and water in his lungs. He was kept in an incubator in the intensive care unit and could only be brought home after a month. Doctors diagnosed him with Down syndrome, a condition that would hinder him from ever developing at a normal rate, both physically and intellectually.

This baby was a fighter. From the very day he was born, life was a struggle for him. His condition was critical and his health was touch and go. And so he was named Emilio Emmanuel, so that, true to his name, God may be with him.

Mio, as he was fondly called, pulled through his first few months, fighting the instability of his health with a strength one would never suspect in a one-month-old baby. Though physically he was weak, he had a strong will and remarkable fortitude.

Mio's first few difficult months were not the last of his challenges. Because of his condition, he had to undergo therapy to strengthen his weak physique. At the age of 2, doctors noticed a low blood count and confirmed that he had anemia. A few months later, his condition worsened and he was diagnosed with cancer of the blood, leukemia, a sickness common to children with Down syndrome.

It was quite a load to bear for a child of 2. Every other week was spent in the hospital for blood transfusions and chemotherapy sessions, and on the days he was out of the hospital he still had to go to the doctor for check-up.

Emilio, at his very young age, displayed so much grace despite his situation. From his hospital bed, he would greet all his visitors with a cheerful laugh and a clap of his hands. Because of his condition, he hadn't learned how to talk or walk, but the sparkle in his eyes and his infectious laughter were enough to lift anyone's spirit. He was a loving little boy, playful and optimistic and always willing to share a smile. Mio would eagerly hug his sisters and brother when they arrived at the hospital. At home, he would roll around his bed laughing at nothing in particular. Through all the pain of therapy, Mio kept his head high and had a smile on his face.

Soon after his third birthday, Emilio passed away. But up to the very end, he was an astounding example of strength. He fought his illness and faced his challenges like a hero.

He was a gift to his family, our family. He was my brother.

Mio has been an inspiration to me. He taught me that one doesn't have to be powerful to be strong. I continue to be amazed that so many of life's valuable lessons I learned from a child—a baby—someone who couldn't speak or even walk. Through times of tribulation, all one received from him was a loving smile. In facing his hardships and trials that life handed him, he was a pillar of courage. He was one of the best people I have ever met.

I believe we all go through challenges for a reason. Mio's story is one for me to share, so that others too may be inspired by his life and find the driving force in their own lives. I hope that we will remember this lesson that my brother taught me: Dare to dream big, but do not forget the little things along the way. Aim high, aspire to reach your goals. But do not forget to thank those who helped you along the way, and to celebrate small victories.

Let us remember that each of us has our own gifts. No matter what life deals us, it is ours to choose what to make of it. We can fight our way through the hardest times, if we keep believing that we can make it through.

My brother faced so many challenges in his three years here on earth, but he showed me that one has to fight one's fights from within. During the three years of his life, he made me believe that miracles do happen in this world.

You all already have so much to be proud of. So I hope that each of you will go out to create your own miracles. In your journey, may you keep looking out for that big dream, that ultimate goal, and try your hardest to achieve it.

But do not forget to look over your shoulder sometimes, so that you may also see how much you have progressed. There are times when we were so engrossed with how much we have yet to achieve that we forget how far we have already come.

And most especially, remember to meet all your challenges with a smile. Times will be trying, and I cannot guarantee that you will be able to get all that you want. But even if times may get tough, we all already have so much to be thankful for. Being able to remain optimistic and strong in the face of difficulty is one of the most admirable qualities that one can find in a leader.

I wish you luck in all your endeavors, and I hope that you may also find your Emilios, your God-be-with-you's. As leaders, it is not in the end of the journey that you find your reward. It is in the process of exercising leadership—the process of learning, adapting, inspiring.

So enjoy your journey. Dream big. Celebrate your victories. Be thankful for what you have. And keep smiling. This is only one more meaningful step in what I am sure will be a lifetime of inspiring experiences.

Chinie Canivel, 20, is a management engineering senior at the Ateneo de Manila University. This piece is part of the inspirational message she delivered during the 2004 Ayala Young Leaders Congress.

THEY SAID

Last 30 percent

"It is so sad... Just think, we lose 40 percent to graft, 30 percent to debt servicing. What will be left? 30 percent? How can you run a government with 30 percent?"

—Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales urging legislators to give up their pork barrel to ease the budget deficit

'Moralistic' medicine

"Doctors are not supposed to be moralists. The woman has already committed the 'sin.' How do you now help somebody who is having a complication? That should be the concern of the health care system. Not how she got the health problem, but how to help someone with that health problem."

—Dr. Cynthia Garcia on doctors who refuse to treat patients they suspect of committing abortion

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Education flaw in sign language

THIS is in reference to the INQUIRER's news item "Deaf also mark National Language Month." (PDI, 8/30/04) Although the teachers of the Southeast Asian Institute for the Deaf correctly observe the general unfamiliarity of deaf students with Filipino, their opinions on Filipino Sign Language (FSL) are not quite accurate.

FSL was not devised by educators. It is a visual language that evolved naturally among the Filipino "Deaf." Unfortunately, despite evidence that it has been in use for virtually four centuries, the government has not really recognized it, much less supported its actual use in classroom instruction or communication. By no means is FSL artificially devised. It is not like the numerous Manually Coded English systems underlying the communication philosophy employed by the majority of public and private schools.

The responsibility of producing deaf graduates who are virtual aliens to their own Philippine languages rests on a formal educational system that has placed emphasis and prestige on the use of artificial sign English systems and American Sign Language. The anachronism and impracticality (and even danger, as the article points out) of such a stance is a matter that the Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education and National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons have to address in the next few years.

FSL, if used in the curriculum as part of a bilingual framework, can certainly make a difference in the comprehension of written Filipino (or any written language for that matter). However, FSL should not be mistaken as being related to, or be seen as a product of, spoken or written Filipino. Like all other visual languages, FSL possesses a complex hierarchy of linguistic structure, and is governed by a wide range of rules and linguistic devices. Some of these, it holds in common with spoken languages; the rest are unique to themselves.

It is an entity distinct from any spoken (Filipino, English) or sign language. It consists of indigenous elements, and bears clear imprints of language contact and history. It is not only a bona fide language but is also a symbol for the Filipino Deaf community. It reflects the progressive view of deafness beyond impairment as well as the collective pride and identity of deaf Filipinos as a linguistic minority. Such a view of FSL is strongly supported by empirical data gathered by the National Sign Language Committee and elucidated in forthcoming linguistics reference series and dictionaries prepared by the Philippine Federation of the Deaf and this organization.

The writer, Volt Contreras, uses deaf with a lower case d. The cultural term "Deaf" is used when referring to the community of users of the natural sign language, and held together by common goals, values and aspirations. The term deaf describes individuals focusing only on their hearing impairment as a medical condition. Deaf individuals are all deaf but not all "Deaf" are deaf.

—LIZA B. MARTINEZ, Ph.D.,
sign linguist and director,
Philippine Deaf Resource Center,
27 K-7 St., West Kamias, QC

THANK you for giving the distinction between "deaf" and "Deaf."—Ed.

PNOC not a losing subsidiary

IN THE AUG. 31, 2004 issue of the INQUIRER, the news item "Gov't prescribes higher rates, new taxes" cited a "projection" that the Philippine National Oil Co. will end up with a P1.4 billion loss in 2004. It also reported on a recent Senate hearing wherein the PNOC was lumped together with the National Power Corp., National Food Authority and the National Electrification Administration as "top money losers."

I would like to set the record straight: the PNOC is making money, not losing money. The PNOC and its subsidiaries have also registered improved financial ratios—a significant and substantial turnaround since I assumed its presidency in February 2001. Thus, based on our record of the past three years, the PNOC is projected to continue making a substantial profit this year.

The Commission on Audit-audited 2003 financial statements reveal that the PNOC and its subsidiaries posted a consolidated net income of P1.88 billion: the PNOC's share is P534 million, and its subsidiaries, P1.355 billion. For 2003, the PNOC remitted P793.9 million to the national government.

During the period 2001-2003, the PNOC posted a consolidated net income of P4.646 billion, with total corresponding remittances to the national government of P1.804.4 billion.

Given this record, the PNOC forecasts a consolidated net income of P2.446 billion for this year and a corresponding remittance of P629.5 million to the National Treasury.

The confusion over the PNOC's projected P1.4 billion "loss" could have been due to a recent report by the Department of Budget Management on the Budget of Expenditure and Sources of Funds (BESF) of selected government corporations.

The BESF report did not correctly reflect the PNOC's "Share of Subsidiaries in the Loan Related Expenses" in the amount of P1.576 billion for 2004. It overstated the expenses and understated the net income. This discrepancy resulted in a perceived projected loss of P1.4 billion for the PNOC, instead of the correct positive P166.7 million net income from its operations alone, excluding the projected net income from its subsidiaries of P2.279 billion.

I am making this clarification and correction in the interest of accuracy so that the PNOC will be projected in a true light, i.e., positive growth and net incomes.

—THELMO Y. CUNANAN,
immediate past president and
chief executive officer,
Philippine National Oil Co.

After selling out our fishing grounds, what's next?

WE at Kilusang Mangingisda, a coalition composed of 14 national and regional federation of small fisherfolk, protest the joint fishing and oil agreement between the Philippines and China, which was signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

It is a sell-out of our patrimony to a country that has historically ravaged our seas by using over-exhaustive fishing gears and continuously trampled our existing laws and policies.

You only need to go and visit Palawan and ask the small fisherfolk further marginalized by the decreasing fish catch there—how grave is China's invasion of the sea resources in their localities. You may even ask our many environment crusaders, how many marine casualties this China incursion translates to.

This latest of the trade parody organized by Ms Arroyo just shows that this government has already surrendered our stake in our vast fishing grounds and minerals, as it continues to cultivate and beg for more lopsided small brother-big brother relationships with other developed countries.

What is next in this governments bargain spree? Our land, our women, our children?

It is high time to review our strategy for development. Joint fishing and oil exploration with other countries is a total withdrawal of support to our local industries, which are already being swamped by a huge amount of smuggled goods, unfair competition and unfair trade.

We need subsidies to strengthen our fishing industry, and knowledge and skills to increase our capability to explore and manage our seas. Not this complete sell-out at the expense of future Filipino generations.

—BONIFACIO FEDERIZO,
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Bold films, censorship and business decisions

IN HER column "Movies for adults" (PDI, 8/31/04) Rina Jimenez-David missed the point—two points, to be exact.

The first is, as a business establishment, SM Cinema is perfectly within its legal right to choose which movies to show or to refuse the showing of some. As a corporation, exercising that right is a prerogative and a business decision. To deny SM the right to choose the products it can market is as vile as the demon of censorship.

The second point is that using the movie "Jan Dara" as the ultimate measure of what Filipino bold films can achieve insults films of that caliber. As a moviegoer, David obviously has been insulated from the sleaziest and most degrading film trailers that are used to promote that genre.

There is no basis of comparison between "Jan Dara" and the deplorable cinematic quality reflected by most of the Philippine-produced bold films.

—ANDRIAN LEE,
president, Trevoca Corp. Ltd.,
andrianlee@yahoo.com

Day care centers and kindergarten schools have distinct objectives

IT is kind of reassuring that the government has awakened from a long lull and has finally realized that the quality of the country's education system—particularly as reflected by present-day public elementary and high school graduates—leaves very much to be desired. But we are not facing the problem squarely by standardizing what is taught in barangay day care centers, as announced by the President in her State of the Nation Address last July; or by converting day care centers into kindergarten schools. (PDI, 8/1/04) These entities have separate, distinct and mutually exclusive purposes that, prudence dictates, need not be reinvented or merged.

The day care center, originally called "day nursery" in Europe, dates back to the Industrial Revolution, which began to break up family groups. Fathers, mothers and older children were then often employed in factories for long hours each day, resulting in parental neglect of younger children, with ages ranging from 18 months to 4 years. Then and now, the day nurseries and the day care centers were, and are, basically designed for one purpose: not as a school, but as a sort of social welfare agency where mothers at work may leave their young children. This explains why day care centers are mostly found in rural or depressed communities, where few families can afford a maid.

On the other hand, kindergarten (from the German word for children's garden) reveals its distinct objective. That is, to supplement the home life of the child, broaden his childhood experiences and give him opportunities to explore and understand his world. By beginning to cultivate young children's (usually ages 5 and 6) normal tendencies for play, exercise, observation, imitation and construction, the kindergarten schools introduce them gradually into the work of the elementary grades. As such, they indeed provide good educational foundations. But they need not necessarily augment, much less advance, the academic learning that the child may yet gain in Grade I at age 7.

I do not see any clear, direct and practical solution to our educational deficiencies by standardizing what are taught in the day care centers, or by reinventing or merging the functions of either or both of these two child-development institutions. Meanwhile, we keep saying that the graduates of our old public schools (circa 1950-1960), who never tasted kindergarten or seventh grade (abolished in 1940), learned better English, Math and Science than their present-day counterparts.

This brings up this question: Where have today's public schools gone wrong? A comparative study of the "old" and the "new" schools' respective curricula, classroom hours, number of pupils per class, quality of teachers and medium of instruction—to mention some basic parameters—would lead to the already obvious answers.

—RUDY L. CORONEL,
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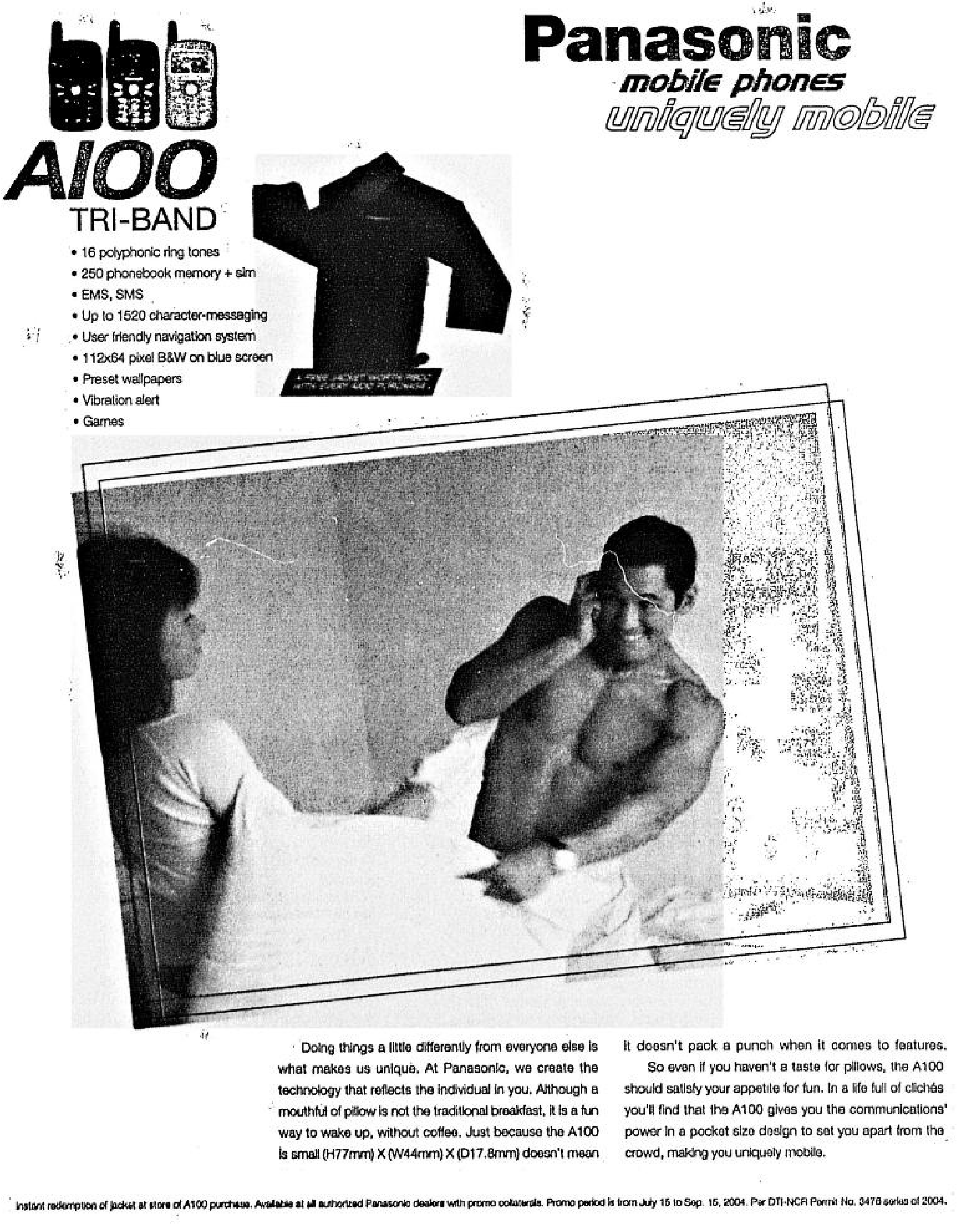

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TONEE DESPOJO/CDN PHOTO

A car trunk bares an impromptu store on the South Reclamation Area in Cebu City, a favorite hangout of Cebuanos.

Traders decry bird flu scare spun by Davao Oriental execs

MATI, Davao Oriental—Businessmen and tourism officials here have questioned a move by the provincial board declaring the province under "imminent danger from the bird flu virus."

Leo Sibala, president of the Davao Oriental Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the move came as a surprise because there had been no incident of bird flu infection in the province.

"They have no basis to declare Davao Oriental under imminent danger from bird flu virus. The provincial government did not bother to consult us before making such declaration, which will definitely kill the business industry, not only in the province but in the whole country," Sibala said.

He said businessmen could not understand why there was such a declaration in the first place.

"Why, was there an instance that the bird flu virus struck here? There was none. Have they found a single case of bird flu virus in Davao Oriental? Nothing. The provincial government did not say anything to at least justify their bird flu declaration. They should have been more circumspect on this matter," Sibala said.

Provincial veterinarian Antonio Agustin admitted that he influenced the provincial government to make the move.

"We have at least two towns in Davao Oriental which are known sanctuaries of migratory birds coming from bird flu-stricken countries," Agustin said.

He said even though not a single case of bird flu infection was monitored in the province, it would be better if authorities were prepared.

"The declaration that put Davao Oriental under imminent danger of bird flu virus was meant to prepare the provincial government and the residents. *Ferdinand Zuasola, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Gunmen attack radioman's house

COTABATO CITY—Armed men on board a Tamaraw FX van opened fire on a radio reporter's house in Midsayap, North Cotabato but failed to harm any of its occupants, police said yesterday.

Senior Insp. Jovet Culaway, Midsayap town police chief, said the attack took place Monday dawn in Barangay Upper Glad.

Culaway said the armed men's target was the house of Gary Fuertas, 30, the Cotabato City-based correspondent of Bombo Radyo Philippines.

Fuertas, who was not around when the shooting occurred, personally reported the attack to the police on Tuesday.

In a separate interview, Fuertas said he had no idea who was behind the attack, which came in the wake of threats possibly related to his reporting on illegal drugs and gambling activities in the town.

"I have no known enemies although I have been receiving death threats on my cell phone," he said.

Fuertas said his neighbors in Upper Glad told him that shortly before the attack, they noticed an FX roaming the area.

Then the occupants of the FX, using rifles with silencers, opened fire at the house of Fuertas.

Fuertas said his wife and two children and his in-laws were in the house during the attack but luckily, none of them was hurt.

Culaway said the police found at least 14 spent shells of M-16 Armalite rifles at the scene of the attack.

Midsayap Mayor Romeo Araña ordered the police to speed up its investigation of the attack.

In Zamboanga City, police authorities in Western Mindanao and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao said they were giving priority to unsolved attacks on journalists in their areas of responsibility.

Chief Supt. Servando Hizon, Western Mindanao police director, said he would dig into police records to find out the exact number of journalists attacked in recent years.

"General Aglipay instructed us to conduct or make an inventory of unsolved cases and resolve these cases (at the rate of) at least five percent a month," Hizon said.

Based on records collated by the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), at least 26 Mindanao-based media practitioners were killed out of the total 55 journalists murdered nationwide since 1986.

Of the 26 Mindanao-based journalists who were killed, nine were from Western Mindanao.

Chief Supt. Sukarno Ikbala, ARMM police chief, said he will also review the records of attacks on journalists in his area.

"We will review older cases maybe five to 10 years back. We will have to analyze first the available data and information, we will also review the statement of former witnesses, maybe we could uncover something after years that these cases remained idle," Ikbala said. *Edwin Fernandez, Charlie Señase and Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Groups launch forum on mining, wood industry, tribal folk

A FORUM on two executive orders—one on revitalizing the mining industry and another in promoting sustainable forest management—starts today in Tagaytay and organized by four groups who are players in the two fields.

Led by the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, the forum will discuss Executive Order No. 270 and 270-A on revitalizing the mining industry and Executive Order No. 318 on promoting sustainable forest management.

The forum is also being organized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Technical Advocacy Project of Philexport and the Philippine Wood Producers Association.

The forum, to be held at the Development Academy of the Philippines in Tagaytay City, also seeks to bring together varying opinions on mining and the problems that mining faces in the country.

It also seeks to put together players in the mining industry and members of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

"This just goes to show that we talk," said Benjamin Philip Romualdez, president of the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines, "and that the relationship (between mining and the tribal people) is not entirely hostile."

In a memorandum to the President issued last June 21, the DENR has endorsed a detailed Minerals Action Plan (MAP) that would implement E.O. 270 and E.O. 270-A.

Among those invited to the two-day forum on mining and the wood industry are Elisea Gozun, former environment secretary and her successor, Michael Defensor; Horacio Ramos, director of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau; Antonio Olizon, head of the Philippine Wood Producers Association; Rosalina Bistoyong, executive director of the NCIP and members of the NCIP.

2 'acting mayors' confuse Roxas City

By Felipe V. Celino
PDI Visayas Bureau

ROXAS CITY—The people of this city are confused as to who is the real acting chief executive after Mayor Antonio del Rosario was hospitalized due to a heart ailment.

Vice Mayor Alan Celino yesterday issued a memorandum to all department heads and the two government banks and informed them that he was the acting mayor.

But City Administrator Emmanuel Losanta released a separate memorandum, telling them that he remained the officer-in-charge (OIC) of the mayor's office.

He warned the department heads not to transact business with Celino's office, because the mayor had designated him as caretaker of the city government.

Because of the confusion, several transactions in the city government were not acted upon.

Sayyaf member in Sipadan kidnaps arrested

ZAMBOANGA CITY—A suspected Abu Sayyaf bandit who allegedly took part in the kidnapping of 21 mostly foreign hostages in Sipadan, Malaysia in 2000 was arrested in Jolo, Sulu on Monday.

Southern Command chief Major Gen. Generoso Senga identified the arrested suspect as Javier Soriano alias Jojo Rasul.

Soriano, who has a pending case of kidnapping, carries a P150,000 reward on his head.

But Brig. Gen. Nelson Allaga, chief of the 3rd Marine Brigade, said Soriano was still undergoing interrogation "because there are some groups claiming that this guy is clear."

"We still have to determine if indeed he was involved (in the Sipadan kidnapping)," Allaga said.

Soriano is currently detained at the Philippine Marines. He was erroneously reported killed in a clash with soldiers last year.

Soriano's arrest came just a few days after the arrest of the sister of former ASG spokesperson Aldam Tilao, alias Abu Sabaya, who was believed to have been killed in an encounter with government troops in June 2002 in Zamboanga.

Satra Tilao was arrested in Isabela, Basilan by government forces Friday. She was reportedly involved in the Dos Palmas kidnappings in May 2001.

Soriano is believed to be an aide to Abu Sayyaf senior leader Ghalib Andang, whose faction led the Sipadan raid. Andang was captured last year and is now in military custody.

The Abu Sayyaf is considered a terrorist organization by the Philippine and US governments.

It is believed to have had links with al-Qaida when it was founded by Afghan-trained Islamic firebrand, Abdurajak Abubakar Janjalani, who was killed in a gunbattle with police in 1998.

The military says the movement has since turned into a criminal gang, specializing in kidnappings and killings of both foreign and local missionaries and businessmen.

A year after the Sipadan kidnapping, the rebels raided another resort and kidnapped nearly two dozen hostages, including three Americans. Two of the Americans later died, while the third was rescued after more than a year in captivity. *Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau with reports from Alcuin Papa in Manila and AFP*

US group offers help to MILF in negotiations

DAVAO CITY—The United States Institute for Peace (USIP), an independent body funded by the American government, has offered to teach leaders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) strategies on negotiations, a rebel spokesperson said.

Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said the offer was made by Dr. Eugene Martin, executive director of the USIP's Philippine Facilitation Project, through a letter last week.

He said Martin told the MILF leadership that the USIP was willing to conduct seminar-workshops, which could help MILF negotiators in the peace process.

Kabalu said Martin told the MILF leadership that the USIP has vast experience in the peace process in the Balkans, Serbia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and even in Iraq.

He said Martin told them the resolution of the conflict in Mindanao is high priority and hopes the MILF would take advantage of the offer to boost the chances of the ongoing talks.

"The MILF leadership has yet to decide on it," Kabalu said.

He said the MILF was open to the proposal and advised that the USIP course the letter through Malaysia.

Malaysia acts as the third country mediator in the peace negotiations between the government and the MILF.

Reports quoting Malaysian Defense Minister Najib Razak said Kuala Lumpur would send an advance team of monitors to the Philippines on Friday to help lay the foundations for the resumption of the talks, which could begin in October.

Both the Philippine government and the Muslim separatist group expressed optimism the peace talks could already resume.

In Malacañang, President Macapagal-Arroyo announced that members of the Malaysian monitoring team are scheduled to arrive tomorrow.

Chief government negotiator Silvestre Afable, who is also presidential communications chief, said the talks could begin in October.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said Brunei would contribute 10 men to the monitoring team, adding that Ms Arroyo would meet with that contingent when she visits Brunei on Thursday to attend the wedding of the Southeast Asian sultanate's crown prince.

The monitoring team will observe both the ceasefire in place between the government and the MILF and will also inspect development projects in areas affected by the separatist war in Mindanao.

Mindanao has been plagued by Muslim separatist violence for over three decades. Aside from sending peace monitors, Muslim Malaysia has also offered a neutral venue for forthcoming peace talks with the MILF, the main Muslim rebel group. *Allan Nawal, PDI Mindanao Bureau with reports from Juliet Labog in Manila and AFP*

ROUNDUP

Jewelry shop robberies

CEBU CITY—Unidentified robbers fled with up to P250,000 worth of jewelry after attacking the H Lhuiller jewelry store and pawnshop along Banilad Road, Cebu City at around 10:25 a.m. on Friday. The four suspects who were wearing bonnets and armed with M-16 Armalite rifles and an Ingram, disarmed the pawnshop's guard of his .38 cal. pistol and broke the glass display cabinet and fled with about 100 items of jewelry in a maroon Toyota car with plate GAY 492. Police found the vehicle abandoned at Remedios Street, Mandaue City, about a kilometer away from the pawnshop.

Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau

Teacher sued

SAN FERNANDO CITY—The parents of a high school student who drowned during a class outing early this year have filed charges against the class' adviser and the head of a government school in Laoag City for the death of their son. Sued for gross negligence and grave misconduct were Alex Lumabao, 33, a teacher at the high school department of the Ilocos Norte College of Arts and Trade (Incat), and Eugenio Pedro, Incat superintendent. Juan Blas, 44, and his wife Marissa, 47, accused Lumabao of deceiving his students to attend a class outing purportedly to do a research at the Bislak River in Vintar town. Their son, John Henrick, 14, drowned during that outing. But Lumabao said he was only invited to the activity.

Peter La. Julian, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Ex-Army man slain

LUCENA CITY—At least two suspected members of the communist hit squad shot dead a retired military intelligence officer in Infanta, Quezon on Sunday. A police report identified the victim as former M/Sgt. Ferdinand Capuyan, formerly assigned with the 59th Army Infantry Battalion based in Infanta and the acting head teacher in a Protestant school in Infanta. Capuyan was gunned down in front of his house while aboard a motorcycle as he waited for his wife to open the gate. The suspects came from behind and shot the victim at close range. The victim suffered fatal bullet wounds in the face, neck and chest. The suspects casually walked away from the scene after the shooting.

Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Elderly stabbed dead

CITY OF CALAPAN—Two unidentified men stabbed dead Silvina Guevarra, 74, on Wednesday. Guevarra, a resident of Sitio Tadyangao, Barangay Kaligtasan, Bongabong town, was tending her cow near a house when she was suddenly attacked by the suspects in Sitio Pandan, Barangay Sagana, Bongabong. Supt. Oliver Ventocilla, newly-designated assistant provincial director of Oriental Mindoro, said the case was still under investigation

Madonna Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Floreño G. Solmirano

Drugstores reel from senior citizens' law

By Madonna T. Virola and Ronnie Lorejo

THANKS to the senior citizens law, 75-year-old Manuel Dasalla has been enjoying 20-percent discounts from food chains and public transportation. But members of the Federation of Senior Citizens in Legazpi City, of which Dasalla is president, tell a different story.

The members are complaining that certain drugstores have not been fully complying with provisions of Republic Act No. 7432 of 1992. Some stores, they claim, give them a discount of only five percent, instead of the 20 percent discount that the law gives to citizens who are 60 years old and above and with P60,000 income and below.

Mayor Noel Rosal said he had been bombarded with similar complaints. After he met with the drugstore owners, the discount privilege has been restored in full. The stores, however, would be strict with requirements for identification cards, senior citizen's booklets and doctor's prescriptions bearing the beneficiary's name, age and address, and the doctor's license number.

Segundo Gamil, who owns De Luxe Drugstore in Daraga town, said that since the law took effect in 1992, "we serve four to 12 elderly persons in just one day." He laments that the law is "really a big loss for us, especially the small drug stores."

Gamil, former chapter secretary of the Drug Stores Association of the Philippines in South Bicol, estimates a loss of 12 percent of his store's gross sales every month due to the discount.

Cyre Clores, manager of Mercury Drug Corp. in Albay, said the store served more than 30 senior citizens every day in the Old Albay District alone. This cost the store about P90,000 a month, he said, and the loss would eventually be felt in the long run and affect the company's profitability.

The store is strict on the discount requirements "because there are senior citizens [who] present IDs and prescriptions that are not theirs," he said.

Expanded

One of five senior citizens in the country live in Southern Tagalog and Bicol, according to the 2000 census of the National Statistics Office.

Of the total elderly population of 4.5 million in 2002, more than 960,000 came from Southern Luzon, NSO figures show. The number is projected to rise by more than one million in 2004.

A SENIOR citizen reviews the receipt given to her for drug purchases.

JOANNA TERESSA LOS BAÑOS

The figure is a nightmare for the drugstore owners, more so when Republic Act No. 9257 or the Expanded Senior Citizens Law of 2003 was implemented starting February. That law extended the 20-percent discount privilege to all senior citizens who possess any identification card proving their citizenship. Violators would be fined and imprisoned.

The DSAP, which has about 4,000 members nationwide, said small- to medium-scale drugstores could not afford to comply with the provisions of the new law. Its fact sheet notes that the refusal to give the 20-percent discount is prevalent in the country, particularly in areas where Mercury Drug, a point of price reference among drugstores, is not present.

"We are not against giving discounts to senior citizens. They are [an] important part of society and we will soon be like them. But we cannot afford it at 20 percent. We will die in two years or go to jail," said the association's officers.

Purchases made by senior citizens comprise around 40 percent of the total sales of drugstores, the DSAP said.

"Unlike the other discounted products and services, medicines are mostly taken regularly by the elderly for maintenance. The expanded law means around five million elderly can avail themselves of the 20-percent discount, which compounds our losses," said Arman Ablaza, DSAP chair for business development.

He said the wealthier ones would buy more medicines that are branded.

"Since no OSCA (Office of Senior Citizens Affairs) card is required, there could be abuses in... [the availment of the] discounts," he said.

Tax deduction

DSAP president Celia Carlos said what the drugstores' profits could not make up for losses they incurred from giving senior citizens' discount.

Moreover, she said, tax deductions from the government could not compensate for the losses. According to a Department of Finance official, "a tax credit is a peso-for-peso deduction from a taxpayer's liability due to the government for the amount of discounts such establishment has granted to a senior citizen."

In computing tax deductions, the drugstores end up losing about P250,000 a year, excluding operational expenses, Carlos said. They shoulder 68 percent of the discount and only 32 percent is subsidized by the government, she said.

The government, she said, could not afford to give a refund of at least P3 billion yearly for drugstores alone because of the widening budget deficit.

"The drugstores are seen as villains but in truth, we are the losers. Legislators earn brownie points at our expense," said Josephine Inocencio, another DSAP officer.

"We incur the ire of the senior citizens and their families every time we refuse to give the 20-percent discount. The implementing rules and regulations for the enforcement of the law were drafted without consultation with the drug store industry," she added.

"Even if we want to give the discount, we will lose," she said in Filipino.

The DSAP is seeking to amend the law to provide for a discount that is "reasonable" and fair to both senior citizens and drugstore owners. It specified discounts of three percent on branded medicines and 20 percent on generic drugs.

No more tax deductions, the group demanded. "If they really want a 20-percent discount, we should have a co-sharer. Why is the bigger discount being incurred by us, how about some manufacturers and distributors that really earn?" Ablaza asked.

He said DSAP members had been regularly attending congressional hearings on the proposed amendments of the law, but their clamor had remained unheeded. "Is it because we are a such small sector that we are taken for granted? The law was passed before the [May] elections," he said.

No option

"We don't want to increase prices of medicines just so we could comply with the law because we sympathize with the greater majority who will be affected by this additional burden," said Inocencio. But she said they faced no other options.

"With the new law, the small and medium drugstores would eventually close shop," Ablaza warned. "This would mean unemployment for more than 40,000 employees, 48 chapters and a great setback to the government's economic thrust of propping up the SMEs."

"Without the SMEs, a monopoly of the industry could be created," he said.

In March 2002, then Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who was also secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, admitted before an assembly of senior citizens in Lucena City that it was difficult to implement the 20-percent discount because many people, not necessarily indigents, were availing themselves of it. Drug establishments would eventually lose, she had said.

Concerned authorities tried to check the situation by issuing new senior citizen's IDs, but nothing has changed.

Fil-Am finds meaning in Mangyan culture

QUINT Delgado Fansler, 27, had an eye-opener on his first month of volunteer work in Mindoro.

"A five-year-old (Iraya) Mangyan boy died and I helped carry his body to a CEDC truck [the service vehicle of the office he joined]," said Fansler.

The boy's family could not return home to their village in San Teodoro town from the hospital in Calapan City in Oriental Mindoro because they didn't have the means.

"[In] Manila, you really don't get exposed to death with the crying family. It's shocking. A new experience for me," said Fansler.

Fansler was born in Manila in 1976. His American father, who used to work in a bank, had to travel a lot, bringing his family to Singapore, Korea and Spain. His Filipina mother, Lolita Delgado, is a freelance writer.

Fansler completed Grade 12 at the International School and his secondary education in the United States. He graduated from Georgetown University with a degree in international affairs. As soon as he finished college, he decided to do volunteer work in the Philippines, which he considers his home.

"I realized that I needed to come back to the Philippines because this is where my roots are, this is where my heart is," said Fansler.

Knowing the poor conditions of the country, he thought that was where he had to make a difference.

While on vacation in Manila, Fansler learned about the Jesuit Volunteers Philippines (JVP) and liked its program. He was assigned to the Communication for Evangelization and Development Center in Mindoro and was given a chance, together with JVP partner Angie Resurreccion, to visit a Mangyan settlement called Panaytayan.

FANSLER learns about basketweaving from an Alangan-Mangyan.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MHC

Fansler and Resurreccion documented the *ambahan* (poetry) sessions. On weekends, Fansler would go with Fr. Ewald Dinter to the mountains for missionary work among the Mangyan people.

"I got immediately interested in the IPs (indigenous peoples), which used to be only an academic interest like anthropology. Here, I had become emotional. I was already spending time with them, their beautiful culture, the beautiful people that they are—their humility, openness, friendliness. I felt like there were things I could do," said Fansler.

He was amazed at the Mangyan traditions and could not forget the burial ceremony called *pangutkutan* in the mountains of Bulalacao.

"Not many people are exposed to such digging up the body, arranging the bones and reburying the bones. It's very unique and indigenous," said Fansler. "Searching for a Filipino identity, I found [that] the Mangyans defined it the best I've ever seen."

Fansler has traveled in Brazil, Paraguay, Canada, Colombia and the Philippines (Kalinga, Ifugao and Mountain Province.)

"The Mangyans are unique because they have an extremely rich culture, like the pre-Hispanic writing system, poetry—all of those things intact make you proud as a Filipino. You see how wonderful people they are—nonviolent, very welcoming, trusting, their togetherness and the way they help each other. These are Filipino traits."

"[The] majority of them are not baptized but they are so Christian in their values and culture, and embody so much what we Catholics or Christians look for," said Fansler.

Heritage center

He heard the need for a heritage center from Father Dinter.

The Mangyan Heritage Center (MHC) started as a library and expanded to become a nongovernment organization that focused on Mangyan culture. It was put up after a year of hard work and support from the Phinma Foundation, Toyota Foundation and the Ala-ala Foundation in 2000.

After setting up the board of trustees, Fansler went to the United States to work.

Today, the MHC has a collection of about 2,000 reading materials on the Mangyans, 2,000 poems, 1,000 photos, and 965 books, theses, manuscripts and magazines. Some 750 news items have also been entered in their database.

These days, the center is having difficulty getting funds because its concerns are not as precise as those of the Mangyan, such as food, education, land and recognition of their rights.

"What the Mangyan Mission showed me was that there is also a need for support in the area of culture because without it, people will lose what makes them unique and [how] good they are," Fansler said.

There is no point in securing land rights if the Mangyans no longer want to be Mangyans and not live in the mountains but in Calapan, he added.

The MHC has only one staff member and will run out of funds by the end of the year. No one is pursuing project development work, too.

Fansler said that since half of the board members are in Manila and half in Mindoro, it's hard to carry out the project. "It has been five years and we're the same board. We're tired, we need to rejuvenate. We're organizing a volunteer program," he said.

He believes that many Filipino-Americans are looking for good places to put their charity money and he assures them that the funds will be put to good use.

Madonna T. Virola

Those who want to know more about the Mangyan Heritage Center may visit its website at www.mangyan.org.

Calapan City honors native's war heroism

COL. PEDRO Serran and his heroic exploits during World War II were finally recognized in his home place in Calapan City, the capital of Oriental Mindoro, when local officials named Serran Boulevard the road leading to Barangay Bulusan, where his monument was installed.

The road was inaugurated last month after the city council passed an ordinance on May 23.

Publisher Florante Villarica said it took Serran's son Tony nine years of crusade before his hometown acknowledged the guerrilla leader's contribution to history.

The Island Sentinel, which Villarica owns, published Tony's letters as part of an information campaign about Serran's heroism. The letters are based on documents kept in the archives in Washington, D.C. and the Presidio in San Francisco, California.

Serran was born in Sitio Bonbon in Calapan on Nov. 26, 1913. He lost both parents when he was 13 years old. He had been treated as an outcast because his father, who had leprosy, was moved to the Culion Colony in Palawan. His mother died of cholera.

Under his cousin's care, Serran studied at the Mindoro High School where he was commandant of the Preparatory Military Training. He obtained a law degree from the University of the Philippines.

When World War II broke out, Serran joined Macario Peralta's guerrilla unit in Panay. The two were awarded medals by Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

Serran refused to obey the order to surrender by the Japanese. He headed the 62nd Regimental Combat Team known as the "Iron Regiment," which was responsible for the liberation of the towns of Jani-uay and Zarraga in Iloilo.

In gratitude, the Ilonggos put up the Serran Freedom Park in Zarraga and his monument in the 1990s, said Villarica.

"Among his achievements was establishing one of the most successful intelligence units in the guerrilla movement and being the first to have radio contact between the Philippine underground movement and the American forces headed by MacArthur in Australia, which gave the signal for the Americans to go back to the country," said Villarica.

Serran died in the United States in 1999.

Villarica remembered that noted literary writer NVM Gonzales, who was born in Romblon but grew up in Mindoro, once mentioned to him that Serran was one of those who should be cited for heroism. Gonzales was chosen one of the outstanding Mindoreños and later acclaimed a national artist. *Madonna T. Virola*

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Metro mayors say no to IRA cuts

By Margaux Ortiz, Luige del Puerto, Tarra Quismundo, Tina Santos and Edson Tandoc Jr.

NO REDUCTION.

This is how Metro Manila mayors want their internal revenue allotments (IRA).

At an emergency Metro Manila Council meeting yesterday, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando said the mayors agreed that the reduction of the IRAs would affect the delivery of services in their respective cities and municipalities.

Under the Local Government Code, the IRA consists of the 40-percent share taken from taxes collected by the national government. This is divided as follows: 23 percent for provinces, 23 percent for cities, 34 percent for municipalities and 20 percent for barangays. Revenues traditionally come from real property and business taxes, business licenses, assembly permits and building and occupancy permits.

A suspension of the IRA release for 18 months would roughly amount to P20 billion—a sum that local governments could not afford to lose.

The impact of any cut is direct, and the burden on residents equally great, the mayors said. A reduction in the cash for garbage collection, for one, could mean fewer collection days or fewer collectors.

"If you cut or delay our IRA, my fear is that the national government would be creating problems in many cities and towns in the country," said Mandaluyong Mayor Neptali Gonzales II.

Mandaluyong, home of three of Metro Manila's biggest malls, earned P1.3 billion last year. It has collected an average of P1.1 billion in the last three years. Its IRA stood at P275 million in 2003.

Although financially stable, the city needs the IRA because the money had already been earmarked for programs in health care, housing and other basic services.

In Manila, Mayor Lito Atienza warned that taking out the IRA would be a "phenomenal undoing" since it is the lifeblood of local governments.

More than limiting a city or town's capability to spend on needed projects, removing the IRA could be an obstacle to productivity, according to Atienza.

The IRA, Atienza added, spurs economic activity. "It could be the solution to eventually removing all deficits, putting the economy in order and leading to progress for the nation," he said.

Manila's budget stood at P3 billion six years ago, with collection pegged at P6 billion, Atienza said. This year, the Manila City Council approved a budget of P5.9 billion. Its IRA stands at P1.13 billion, or roughly a fifth of the entire budget.

Marikina Mayor Marides Lourdes Fernando said a cut in the IRA directly affects her city's efforts at maintaining roads, collecting garbage, and starting or finishing infrastructure projects.

Asked if the city could survive without its IRA, Fernando said it would, if only because the alternative is unthinkable. The social implications are enormous, she said.

2004 is "Investment Year" for Marikina, a city famous for its shoes and sparkling streets. It has, however, very few industries to boast of, unlike neighboring Pasig or Mandaluyong.

Fernando fears that a halt in its infrastructure projects would turn away investors. A cut in the IRA might do just that. Marikina earns around P800 million a year. Its IRA stood at P320 million last year.

Pasig Mayor Vicente Eusebio is possibly the only local executive in the metropolis willing to part with the IRA, or at least 25 percent of it. The city's giant revenues would help explain the mayor's position. Home to malls, factories and a major commercial hub, Pasig is the richest city in eastern Metro Manila. It earns around P3 billion annually.

Quezon City, once the country's capital, would also not be adversely affected by a cut in its IRA, according to Mayor Feliciano Belmonte. With P3.3 billion in funds, Quezon City's finances are considerably sound. It owes Land Bank P400 million, but the mayor said he hopes to settle it, and other payables, in due time.

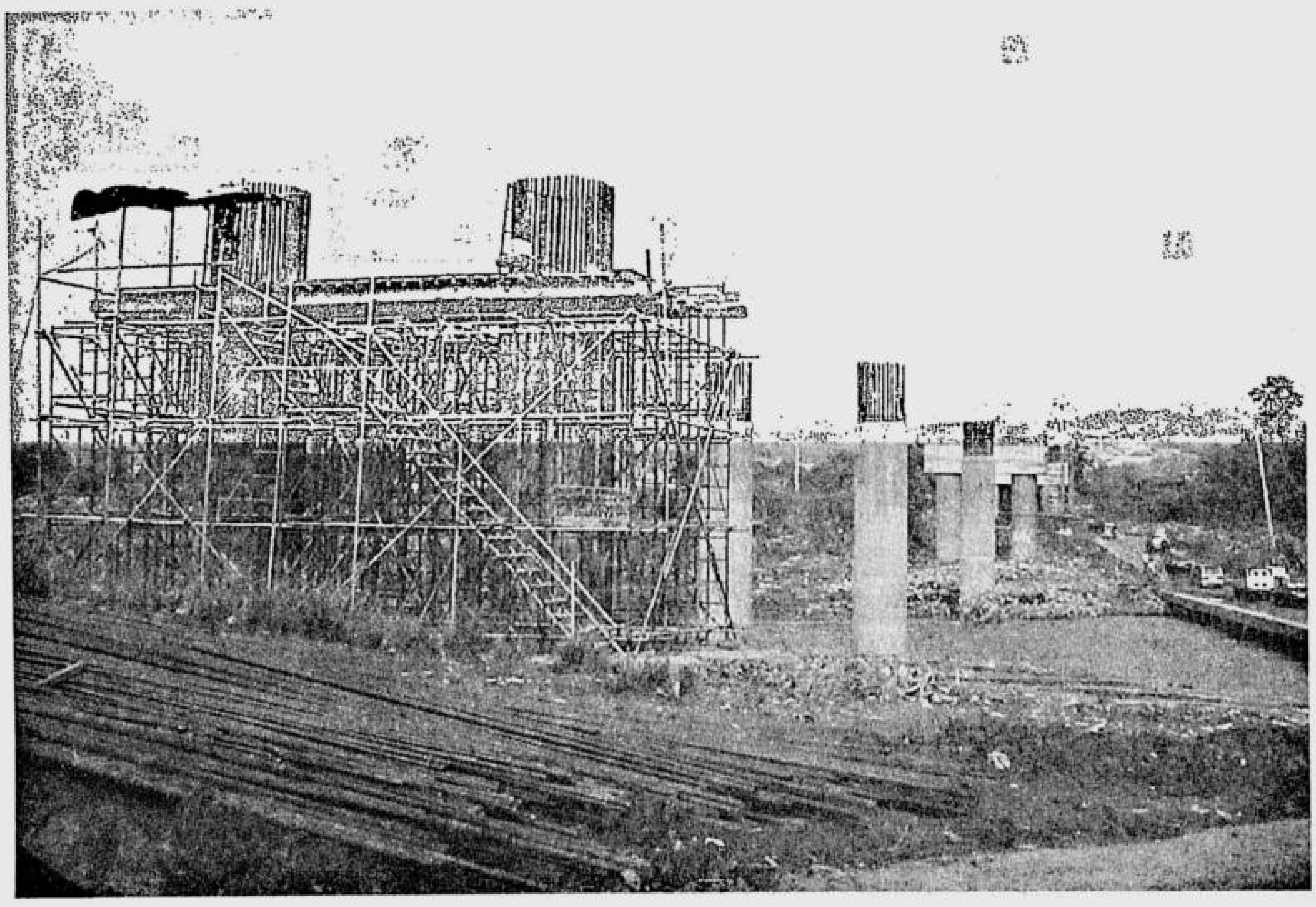
Belmonte stressed that the IRA is used to compensate the local governments' additional expenditures for assuming functions devolved by the national government. "However, the IRA is not a grant," he said. "Many towns and cities depend entirely on the IRA for the delivery of basic services. You cut or delay the IRA, and it will have an adverse effect on the operations of the LGUs [local government units]."

When he assumed office, Caloocan City Mayor Enrico Echiverri said he inherited more than P3 billion in debts. In Malabon, two councilors recently sought Mayor Canuto Oreta's authorization to borrow P600 million for private lenders.

Valenzuela City Mayor Sherwin Gatchalian, on the other hand, had been implementing austerity measures.

And Navotas Mayor Toby Tiangco said they need a bigger budget to maximize government services.

Just like other local officials, the four northern Metro Manila mayors are strongly against the proposal to reduce or scrap the IRA.



STANDING STILL

Work on the 175-meter Tumana Bridge that would link Marikina City with Quezon City appears to have stopped. With only a few laborers seen working on the project, motorists doubt whether it would be completed this year as scheduled. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Money no problem for Parañaque mayor

By Nancy C. Carvajal

DESPITE huge debts reportedly bequeathed to him by his predecessor, Parañaque City Mayor Florencio Bernabe Jr. plans to build a P27-million building beside city hall.

"It's not an unnecessary expense, it's an investment," Bernabe told the INQUIRER when asked to comment on the plan.

The ground floor of the building would house a lounge where taxpayers would be seated on "state-of-the art" chairs while sipping free drinks as they wait for their turn to transact business.

"It is our way of encouraging our constituents to come and pay their taxes amid comfortable conditions," Bernabe said.

Work on the project would be completed in 90 days, he said, adding that AKN Construction won the bid to construct the building.

According to Ed Valen, the city's public information officer, AKN had been doing business with the local government in previous years.

He added that funds for the construction would come from the city's tax collections.

Recently, the Parañaque mayor promised to decrease city government's expenses in the wake of debts allegedly left by former mayor Joey Marquez and aggravated by the current financial crisis.

While criticizing Marquez for leaving behind enormous obligations, Bernabe vowed not to commit the same mistakes he said the former mayor made.

Bernabe blamed Marquez for spending a lot on office and sports supplies, and maintenance and operating expenses in City Hall.

Father who jumped off QC bridge denied bail

By Tina G. Santos

A QUEZON City prosecutor has not recommended bail for the construction worker who jumped from a 20-foot overpass on Commonwealth Avenue which resulted in the death of his one-year-old son.

Inquest prosecutor Wilfredo Andres made the recommendation as he pushed for the filing of parricide charges against Nestor Silang, 33, of Barangay Holy Spirit, before the Quezon City Regional Trial Court.

The Central Police District-Criminal Investigation Unit filed the charges as a result of the death of Silang's son, Nestor Jr., after the suspect leaped from the bridge in the afternoon of Sept, 3.

Silang, while reportedly under the influence of prohibited drugs, took his son from their house then climbed onto the top railing of the overpass, where he stayed for more than an hour while clutching his son.

In a sudden move, he leapt off the bridge.

Silang landed feet first and broke his two legs. His son's head, however, hit the ground.

The baby died while undergoing treatment for head injuries, while the suspect remains confined at the hospital.

Investigation showed that Silang panicked upon hearing the siren of a firetruck that arrived in the area supposedly to help in the rescue operation.

The boy was buried yesterday in a Quezon City cemetery.

Expressway guards shot; 1 killed

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THEY were just doing their jobs.

A security guard was shot dead while a fellow watchman was seriously wounded after two car-riding men opened fire at them near the toll plaza at the North Luzon Expressway early yesterday morning.

Reynaldo Cortez, 45, union president of the Philippine National Construction Company security guards, died of several gunshot wounds.

Truck flagged down

His fellow guard Benjamin Dabu, 47, is undergoing treatment, police said yesterday.

The two guards flagged down a cargo truck on the northbound lane of the expressway at about 2 a.m. for alleged overloading.

But just as the they were about to detach the truck's plates, a red Pajero suddenly stopped in front of the truck.

Two men got out of the Pajero and started shooting Cortez and Dabu using still unknown types of handguns.

Although wounded, Dabu managed to run and jump on a passing bus.

Cortez was left behind lying on the pavement.

The gunmen then reportedly walked up to him and shot him repeatedly.

One of the suspects then reportedly yelled "*Sino pa? Sino pa?*" said another guard, Juanito Cobardo, 51.

Cobardo told the police that the gunmen did not see him because he was urinating nearby when they struck.

Dead on arrival

Cortez was already dead when he was brought to the Manila Central University Hospital.

Caloocan City police chief Leo Garra said the killers were apparently escorting the cargo truck.

Garra said it was possible the truck contained contraband and the killers panicked when the security guards began inspecting the cargo.

Both drivers of the truck and Pajero then drove off.

Raul Gonzales stands up to US

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

NEWLY-appointed Justice Secretary Raul Gonzales is a man after my own heart and, I'm sure, also of those of countless like-minded countrymen.

Gonzales instructed his subordinates at the Department of Justice (DOJ) to give US authorities a hard time in extraditing American nationals from the Philippines.

The former Iloilo congressman and Tanodbayan (precursor of the Ombudsman) gave the order as a tit-for-tat. It followed a California court's denial of a Philippine government's petition to have American Rod Strunk extradited to the country in connection with his wife's Nida Blanca's murder.

Because Gonzales wouldn't give an inch, US Ambassador Francis Ricciardone came calling at the DOJ to appease the new justice secretary.

It was virtual surrender.

The United States has a lot more to lose in the extradition face-off than the Philippines. There are more American citizens, as well as Filipinos, in the Philippines who escape from the US justice system than there are Filipinos and Americans who seek refuge in the United States from Philippine laws.

Gonzales has shown the Americans that Filipinos are no pushovers.

* * *

One of the bitter sentiments of my late Dad, who fought in Bataan during World War II, was that while we Filipinos fought side by side with the Americans, the United States forgot about us after the war and gave preferential treatment to its former enemies.

My father's sentiments are shared by thousands of World War II veterans, some of whom could not even get US citizenship when they've been living in the United States for a long time.

It seems the United States accords more respect to people who fought them than those who fought side by side with them.

I once had a conversation with Sen. Rodolfo Biazon about why he was opposing the war games being conducted by American and Filipino troops.

Biazon said he was not against the war games per se, but that he was making things difficult for the Americans.

"You see, Mon, the Americans will respect you if you stand up to them," he said.

It seems Biazon was right. Look how Ricciardone has deferred to Secretary Gonzales in the extradition stalemate.

* * *

In this day and age, there are still Filipino households that treat their domestic helpers like slaves.

One such household is that of Dolores Ikamen of Barangay Magdalo, Bahayang Pag-asa, Imus, Cavite. Ikamen is a housewife whose husband works in the United States.

Ikamen placed a hot iron on the shoulders and right thigh of Sonia Bernardino, 47, who worked for her as a domestic helper.

Bernardino's only fault was that she wasn't immediately able to comply with her employer's instructions.

A year after the incident, Bernardino is still in a state of shock. She was brought to me by her sister, Leonida, Tuesday.

Cagayan Rep. Jack Enrile was boiling mad when I told him about the maltreatment. He said he would provide lawyers for Bernardino free of charge.

Garbage haulers dump plea

By Martin P. Marfil

THE STRIKE by garbage haulers continued yesterday as they junked an appeal from labor officials to return to work.

"We will continue with our strike until Nilo Pazcoguin talks to us or until the police come in and disperse us," Romualdo Hernandez, spokesperson for the Samahan ng mga Manggagawa sa REN Transport, said.

Pazcoguin owns REN Transport.

The Department of Labor and Employment has certified to the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) that the protest action was a "wildcat strike," Benedicto Bitonio, the department spokesperson, said.

As such, Bitonio said, "The workers should desist from staging a strike and [we] enjoin management [from implementing] any lock-out."

Asked if sanctions would be imposed on the workers, Bitonio said that would be up to the NLRC. He added that the police could only come in should the strike turn violent.

As of yesterday, Hernandez said that they had been able to paralyze the entire fleet of about 120 garbage trucks owned by REN.

The garbage haulers went on strike the other day after management dismissed 29 union officers and 20 other workers and allegedly violated their collective bargaining agreement.

Affected by the strike are the city of Muntinlupa and some parts of Malabon.

To cushion the impact of the strike, Muntinlupa Mayor Jaime Fresnedi temporarily hired trucks from other firms to take care of garbage collection.

An average of 150 tons of garbage is collected in Muntinlupa every day. *With a report from Nancy C. Carvajal*

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Paragua adds crown to 2nd GM result

PARAGUA: Out to breach 2600 Elo rating.

Final standings: 11.5 pts—IM M. Paragua (RP); **10.5**—IM Y. Kuzubov (Ukraine), IM R. Ovetchkin (Russia); **9.0**—IM A. Obukhov (Russia); **8.5**—IM D. Neelotpal (India); **7.5**—GM V. Malaniuk (Ukraine), IM A. Alexikov (Ukraine); **7.0**—IM O. Annageldyev (Turkmenistan), IM S. Volarev (Russia); **6.5**—FM E. Kobylkin (Ukraine), GM S. Kalygin (Russia); **6.0**—GM R. Hasangatin (Russia)

AFTER the grandmaster result, the crown.

Mark Paragua couldn't ask for more in the Alushta Tournament in Crimea, Ukraine.

Playing pressure-free, Paragua beat fellow International Master Evegeni Kobylkin of Ukraine in the 15th and final round Tuesday night to rule the 16-man event with 11.5 points, a full point ahead of IMs Yuriy Kuzubov of Ukraine and Roman Ovetchkin of Russia.

Employing his favorite King's Indian Attack, the 20-year-old Paragua prevailed after 30 moves and became only the second Filipino, after the late Rosendo Balinas, to win a tournament in a former republic of the defunct Soviet Union. Balinas did the trick in 1976 in Odessa, earning the GM title in the process.

"My plan was to win the game to add a few ratings, so all out *talaga ako sa laro*. Anyway, I've got my GM norm," said Paragua, a member of the Philippine Air Force chess team under the wing of Gen. Jaime Viernes and Col. Roelito Nolasco, through e-mail yesterday.

Posting 10 wins, 3 draws and 2 losses, Paragua, the country's top-rated player, obtained a performance rating of 2661, increasing his Elo rating from 2530 to 2554. He won his second GM norm with two rounds left.

The 20-year-old Paragua, the 1998 World Rapid Under-14 champion, intends to clinch his third and final GM result before competing in the World Juniors in India and the tough Hoogeveens tournament in the Netherlands this year.

Paragua's European campaign is being supported by longtime benefactor Hector Tagaysay of Filway Marketing. Other supporters are College Assurance Plan, Enervon Bright and Abraham Pascual of Pascual Laboratories.

Kuzubov and Ovetchkin also got their GM results by drawing their last round assignments against GM Vladimir Malaniuk of Ukraine and IM Nino Khurtsidze of Georgia, respectively.

Paragua, who resides in Meycauayan, Bulacan, obtained his first GM result after finishing in a tie for first place with Russian GM Oleg Korneev in the 2001 Mondariz International Swiss Tournament in Mondariz, Spain. *Marlon Bernardino, Contributor*

Lions complete cast

SBC gains Final Four for first time in 7 years

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE SAN Beda Lions relied on their tested leader to secure the last ticket to the Final Four.

Arjun Cordero shot nine of his 14 points in the final four minutes as the fifth-year forward lifted San Beda past the Mapua Cardinals, 59-52, yesterday in their playoff for the last semifinal slot in the 80th NCAA basketball tournament at the Araneta Coliseum.

"Arjun is the heart and soul of the team and he showed it. But a lot of players stepped up like (Jerome) Paterno and (Yousif) Aljamal," said Lions coach Nash Racela.

Aljamal scored 14 of his 16 points in the first half, while the slam-dunking Paterno also finished with 16 markers.

The Lions, who are in the Final Four for the first time in seven years, will face the top-seeded Perpetual Help Altas while defending champion Letran meets Philippine Christian U in the semifinal playoffs on Friday.

Perpetul and PCU need just one win to reach the finals while SBC and Letran must win twice to advance.

The Lions saw their eight-point lead, 46-38, in the third period narrowed down to three as Mapua opened the final quarter with a 9-4 attack, 50-47.

But Cordero took over with seven consecutive points that restored the lead to 57-49. When Sean Co drained a three-pointer, 57-52, Cordero responded once more for 59-52 with 46 seconds remaining.

GAMES TOMORROW (*Araneta Coliseum*)
2 p.m.—PCU vs Letran (Srs)
4 p.m.—Perpetual vs San Beda (Srs)

Mapua missed the services of its top scorer Erwin Sta. Maria (16.1 ppg), who sat out his one-game suspension. Forward Andrew Salud also went out of action after dislocating his left knee in the third quarter.

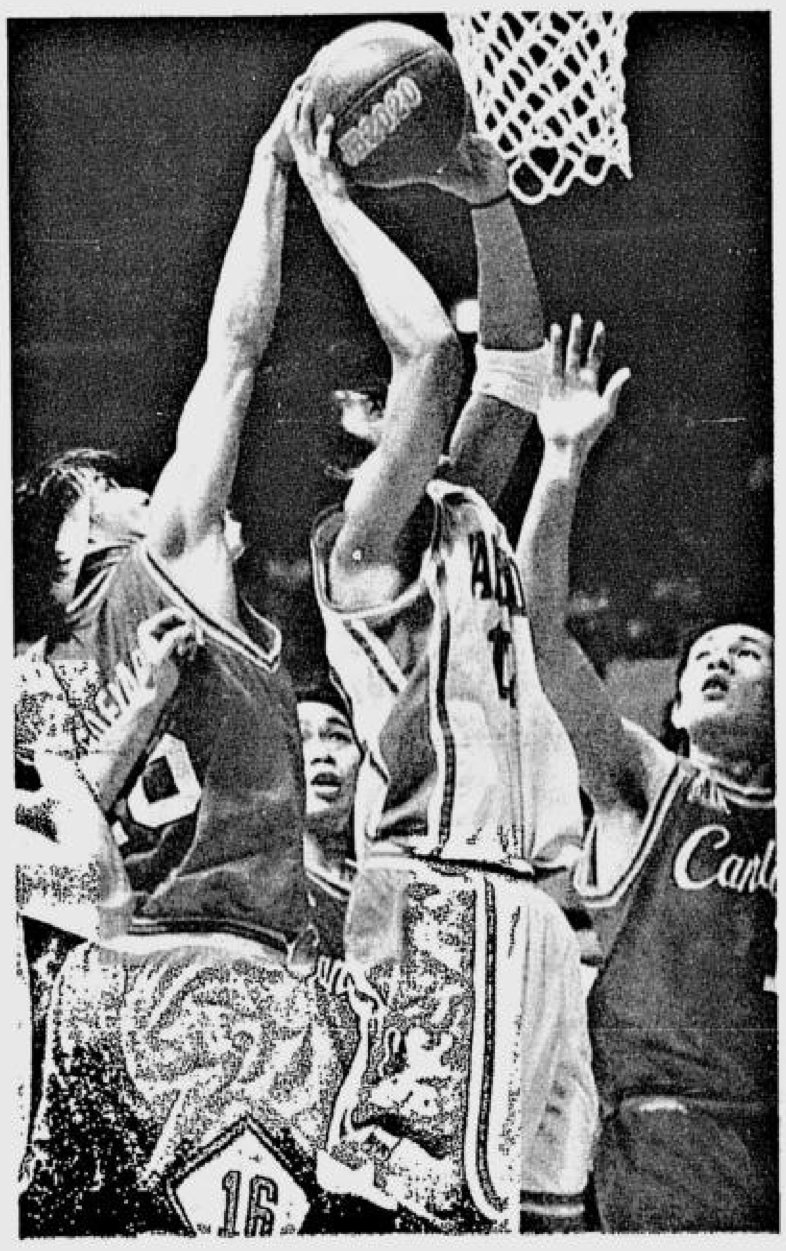
Meanwhile, the Mapua Cheering Cardinals bagged the P50,000 grand prize in the 1st Nestlé Cheering Competition. The Letran Cheering Squad and San Sebastian Pep Squad took the second and third spots, respectively.

The scores:

SAN BEDA 59—Aljamal 16, Paterno 16, Cordero 14, Bombeo 8, Angeles 3, Arbole 2, Hudencial 0.

MAPUA 52—Gonzales 14, Co 12, Veranga 7, Tiongco 7, Guevarra 7, Pascual 3, Salud 2.

Quarters: 17-15, 33-23, 46-38, 59-52.



CHRISTIAN Guevarra of Mapua rejects James Carlo Hudencial (center) of San Beda in their do-or-die game yesterday. ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

JESS YUSON

SENATOR Lito Lapid (left) presides over the Senate public hearing with Sen. Pia Cayetano. Chair Eric Buhain (right) explains PSC plans.

Senate to boost SEAG fund; House aid eyed

By Marc Anthony Reyes

FINALLY, some goodwill—and not the usual derision—from the lawmakers for sports officials.

The Senate yesterday grilled the country's top sports leaders in the aftermath of the medal-less campaign in the Athens Olympics, but later pledged to help raise funds for the country's staging of the Southeast Asian Games next year.

This came on the same day that Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella encouraged his fellow congressmen to donate a portion of their pork barrel to the SEAG kitty. He said this could amount to P600 million.

The twin acts of kindness moved sports officials led by Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain, who fielded questions ranging from the PSC's hand in the importation of race horses to the janitorial and security services contracts during the hearing of the Senate committee on Games, Amusements and Sports headed by Sen. Manuel "Lito" Lapid.

Buhain was joined in the hearing by Philippine SEA Games Organizing Committee chair Roberto Pagdanganan, Philippine Olympic Committee president Celso Dayrit, badminton president and former first lady Ming Ramos, taekwondo's Robert Aventajado, athletics' Go Teng Kok and equestrian chief Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, among others.

The PSC chair said senators Lapid, Pia Cayetano, Loi Ejercito, Richard Gordon and Jinggoy Estrada touched on the different issues concerning the PSC, particularly the coming SEA Games.

"Sen. Cayetano said that when the preparation is already underway, the Senate will be willing to help," said Buhain, who announced during the hearing that the country has a good chance of winning the SEAG overall championship.

"If we can win 110 gold medals (of the 404 up for grabs), we may end up with the overall crown," Buhain said.

Meanwhile, Puentevella said he is confident all 226 members of the Lower House would agree with his proposal to divert a part of the pork

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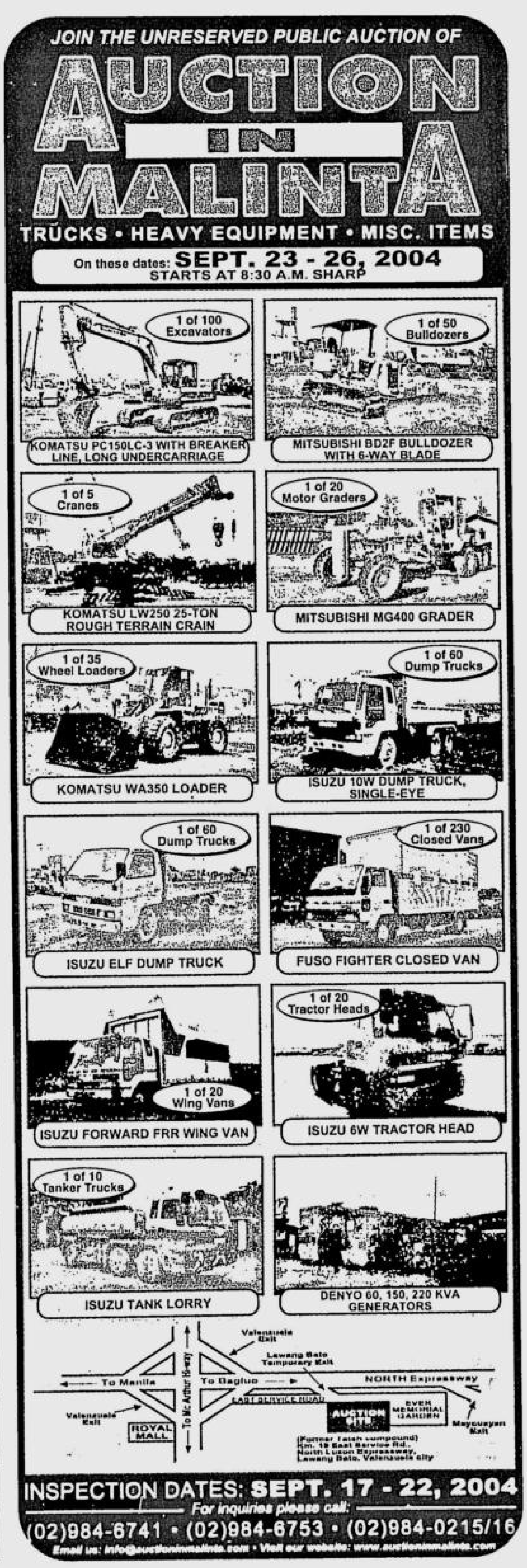
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Odds stacked against RP-Burlington Youth cagers

THE RP-BURLINGTON Youth team is bracing for the worst in the ABC (Asia Basketball Confederation) Junior Men's Championship slated Sept. 14-23 in Bangalore, India.

Missing key players and bereft of international experience, the Filipinos face tall odds in the tournament confined to players 18 years and under.

To compound their woes, the Filipinos are bracketed with the favored South Koreans, the touted Lebanese and the dangerous Kuwaitis in Group C of the 16-nation biennial tournament.

This development further reduced RP's chances of advancing to the quarterfinals.

Only four players—Dylan Ababou, Michael Sy, Alvin Calatayud and Darryl Bautista—are holdovers from the RP-Burlington Youth team that swamped the opposition in the Southeast Asia Basketball Association Men's Junior Championship in Lucena City last April.

Inserted into the lineup after two weeks of frantic search were University of Santo Tomas' Jervy Cruz and Mark Angelo Canlas, Ateneo's Diogenes Villame, Philippine College of Criminology's Andrian Celada and Harvey Espiritu; San Beda's Rodel Raneses, Perpetual Help's Ram Panganiban and Mapua's Led Joseph Claravall.

Canlas is the tallest at 6-foot-5, followed by Cruz at 6-3 and Panganiban and Claravall, both 6-2. Sy is the smallest at 5-8 while Villame and Raneses are both 5-9.

The Burlington socks management, headed by Pete and Ruddy Tan, president and general manager, respectively, is aware of the tough road that lies ahead for the Johny Tam-mentored squad.

"Man-for-man we are really weak, but if we play as a team then we could perform creditably," said Tam, who is being assisted by Ricardo King at the bench.

Teodorico Perena will be the team manager of the RP-Burlington Youth leaving on Saturday for the tournament.

"We are not expecting a lofty finish. We just want the players to give everything for flag and country," said the Tans, the team's biggest supporters in the past few years.

La Salle eyes playoff with win over UE

IT'S all business now for the Pumaren brothers today when Franz's La Salle Archers clash with Dindo's University of the East Warriors in the UAAP senior basketball tournament at the Philsports Arena.

The Archers, who remain a game behind co-leaders Ateneo and Far Eastern at 9-4, must win at 4 p.m. today to force a playoff for the No. 2 spot in the Final Four which carries with it a twice-to-beat bonus.

"It just so happens that Dindo is the one waiting in the wings. We need to win. Then we'll see what our destiny is in the playoffs," said Franz.

STANDINGS	W	L
Ateneo	10	3
FEU	10	3
La Salle	9	4
UE	8	5
UP	6	7
Adamson	4	9
UST	4	9
NU	1	12

GAMES TODAY
(*Philsports Arena*)
11:30 a.m.—UP vs NU (Jrs)
1:30 p.m.—UP vs NU (Srs)
*4 p.m.—La Salle vs UE (Srs)
6 p.m.—La Salle vs UE (Jrs)
**Live on Studio 23*

A victory guarantees La Salle a playoff for second place with the loser of the Ateneo and FEU game on Saturday. Whoever wins between the Eagles and the Tamaraws gets top seeding in the Final Four and a similar twice-to-beat incentive.

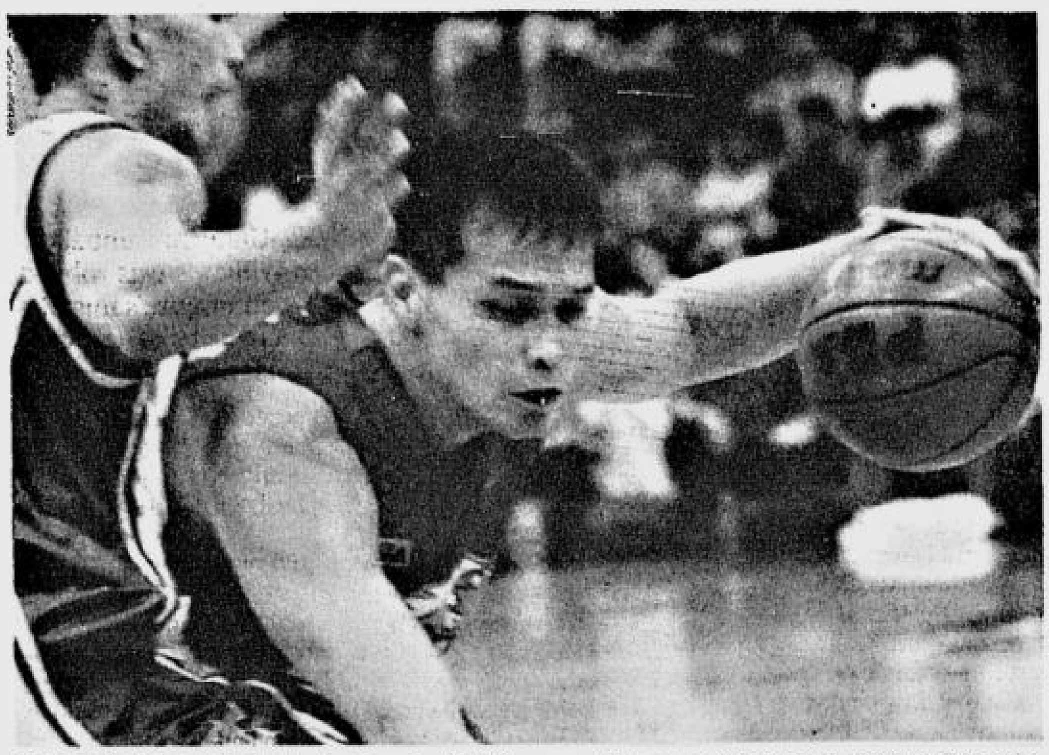
A UE win will lead to a playoff between the Archers and the Warriors for the third spot, leaving Ateneo and FEU to clash for the top two semifinal seats.

It will be 1 against 4 and 2 against 3 in the Final Four pairings.

In the other senior match, the University of the Philippines and the National University try to close the season on a winning note at 1:30 p.m.

La Salle will miss the services of its second leading scorer Joseph Yeo today. The senior guard, who averages 12.1 points per game, will serve a one-game suspension after incurring two unsportsmanlike fouls in La Salle's last game.

The Warriors shocked the Archers in the first round as KG Canaleta scored 25 points in an 82-79 decision. *Jasmine W. Payo*


AUGUST DELA CRUZ

AT A CROSSROADS: Alvin Patrimonio (right) agrees to be an assistant to coach Ryan Gregorio.

Alvin takes on dual AFC role

By June Navarro

ALVIN Patrimonio assumes a dual role when the Purefoods TJ Hotdogs embark on a quest to capture the All-Filipino Cup crown in the 2004 Philippine Basketball Association season.

Patrimonio, the league's second four-time PBA Most Valuable Player awardee after the retired Ramon Fernandez, will suit up for the TJ Hotdogs for the 16th straight season and at the same time act as one of coach Ryan Gregorio's assistants in the AFC starting on Oct. 3.

"Alvin has agreed to be an assistant playing coach. He will perform as such until we negotiate a new contract next year," said Rene Pardo, Purefoods' representative to the Board of Governors.

Pardo revealed that Patrimonio's contract was automatically extended up to July 2005 along with big men Kerby Raymundo and Jun Limpot.

The move was in compliance with a new PBA policy allowing teams to extend the contracts of their players, whose pacts expire at the end of the year.

"His experience on the court will certainly be a plus factor for the coaching staff. In fact, Alvin has already been helping the team in mapping out its gameplan," Pardo told the INQUIRER.

Patrimonio will join assistant coaches Ronnie Magsanoc, Koy Banal and Gregorio on the Hotdogs' bench.

After reaching the 15,000-point plateau in the Fiesta Conference, the 36-year-old Patrimonio is hoping to make it to the 20,000-point milestone

ALVIN/ A21

SPORTSWATCH

Ateneo sweeps La Salle Greenhills

ATENEO swept La Salle Greenhills Sunday to bag the Milo SBP (Small Basketeers Philippines) and Passerelle titles. The Blue Eaglets claimed the Passerelle crown by subduing the Baby Archers, 51-46, before exacting a 56-54 win for the SBP title. Both games will be aired on Sept. 11, from 5 to 8 p.m., on Solar Sports TV.

RP women cagers dump Vietnamese

SINGAPORE—Smarting from a close defeat to Malaysia, the Philippines routed Vietnam, 101-76, Tuesday in the 5th Women's Southeast Asian Basketball (Seaba) Championship at the Toah Indoor Sports Hall here. Joan Napales led the Philippines with 26 points. "I am confident that our ladies can take on any team here," said delegation head Cristy Ramos of the squad sent here by the BAP.

SSC-Cavite repulses Balfour

CAVITE City Mayor Toti Paredes' San Sebastian College-Cavite squad downed Balfour Beatty, 83-79, Tuesday in the quarterfinal round of the 7th Danny Espiritu Cup at the Villamor gym. Homer Go's Homer Cagers trounced Lito Alvarez's Air 21, 99-89, in the second game of the tourney organized by NBDL in honor of sportsman-businessman Danny Espiritu.

SMC All-Stars grace Dulag town fiesta

DULAG, Leyte—In connection with the 409th fiesta celebration of this coastal town south of Tacloban City, the SMC All-Stars basketball team held several activities as part of the sports development program of Mayor Timmy Saño. The SMC All-Stars is hosted by *hermana mayor* lawyer Jeatte Palabrica. Guest speaker during the affair was Games and Amusements Board Commissioner Emmanuel Palabrica. *Salven L. Lagumbay*

5 entries pace 7-Stag derby series

COMPETITION heats up in the second leg of the NCA 7-Stag derby series after only five participants came out undefeated in last Tuesday's 3-Stag prelims. The bets of Bacolod-native Boy Velez and Julie Santiago, Gerry Ramos, Joe Laureno and Jet Fernando and Sons, Efren Canlas and Ito Ynares were tied with 3 wins apiece. The winners of the second leg will be decided in the 4-stag finals at 5 p.m. today. The derby is hosted by Raymond Velayo and Biboy Enriquez.

New hackfight format at PCC

PASAY City Cockpit's new hackfight format (2-cock *ulutan*) will resume on Sunday, with participants who will score two wins guaranteed P6,000 each. The new format will be held every Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. For inquiries, contact 843-1890, 843-1746 and 816-6750.

3-on-3/5-on-5 tilt at Rizal pool

THE PASA water polo committee will hold the 3-on-3/5-on-5 age group championships on Sept. 11-12 at the Rizal Memorial pool as final tryouts for the national men, boys (18 and under) and girls (18 and under) teams that will compete in three important tournaments. Interested parties may contact Ed San Pedro at 404-0864 every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Also slated is the 1st Cebu City Mayor's Water Polo Cup on Oct. 14-16.

OFF ROAD
Noel Bartolome tries to extricate his racing machine out of a mud pit on the way to ruling a 4x4 tournament in Pampanga recently.

Juvic keeps lead; Murakami 1 behind

By Musong R. Castillo

LIPA CITY—Juvic Pagunsan shot a two-over-par 74 yesterday but still clung to the lead in the NGAP series that will determine the members of the Philippine Team to the World Amateur championship next month.

The 26-year-old had nines of 37-37 and, after a 70 at the Langer course of The Riviera on Tuesday, posted a one-stroke lead over former RP Amateur champ Artemio Murakami.

Murakami was the only player in the 11-man field to crack par yesterday with a 71 (34-37) for a 145 total.

Marvin Dumandan signed for a level 72 and, together with his 77 in his home course, had a 149 tally going into the final two legs of the first phase of the series that goes to Tat Filipinas today and the Alabang Country Club tomorrow.

Michael Bibat, the sixth placer in the recent Putra Cup, rebounded from a 78 in the first day with a 73 for a 151 total, with former jungolf ace JR Tanpinco running fifth at 152 after a 74.

The NGAP is using this series to name the three players that will go to Puerto Rico in the third week of October, looking for consistency more than anything else as the Philippines battles the best in the world.

Four more rounds are scheduled next week at venues still to be announced.

Reigning RP champ Jun Bernis continued to disappoint, shooting an 80 in the second round after a 77 Tuesday to be in seventh with a 157 total.

Former caddies champion Jay Bayron (78) and Boyet Saragoza (77) were tied for sixth at 155, with Gene Bondoc turning in a second straight 79 for 158 like Erwin Vinluan (77).

Jungolfer Laurence Negrido turned in an 83 and brought up the rear with a 165 total.

Guarantee

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

A READER asked: "How sure are we that a gold medal awaits us in the 2008 Beijing Olympics?"

There's no such thing as a sure thing.

Nothing's sure in this world except death and tax. You die because you are as imperfect as the world. God has made it that way and, therefore, only God can unmake what He's made.

Tax is life's shadow, as inseparable to us as the thread to a needle, the shabu to an addict.

Another thing that's as sure as the sun rises in the east every morning is, no one leaves this world alive.

Thus, who said all boxers sent by Cuba would end up gold medalists in Athens?

They may be the acknowledged masters of the sport for many Olympiads now but that doesn't mean they'll win everything they aspire for in the Olympics all the time.

One Thai, who named his son Athens before flying to the Olympiad, had burst the Cuban bubble and won the welterweight gold. That was a shocker?

Not to me. It may have shocked Cuba, but not me.

Who would have thought Jasmin Figueroa would defeat the reigning European champion from Italy in the very first round of archery competitions?

That was a shocker, too?

Oops, again, not to me. It may have shocked Italy and all of Europe even, but not me.

And who would have thought America would lose the basketball gold?

Did it also shock you to see the NBA-laced American team lose its Olympic title?

Again, don't look at me. That, too, was not a shocker.

The rule of life is, even the best of the best on paper can lose and the worse of the worst can win.

The small can defeat the big as proved by Vietnam's victory over America in the Vietnam War.

Anyone who doesn't believe in flukes cannot believe in anything, even in GMA's legendary ability to turn things around even in the most difficult of situations—such as the current fiscal crisis besetting her administration.

I will never dispute the fact that all our 16 Olympians went to Athens fully prepared, physically and mentally. It's just that the rest of the competitors from around the world were just as prepared as we were.

Yes, I believe Eric Buhain when he said: "Always, there's no guarantee for success, especially in the Olympics."

Eric has been to two Olympic Games, not winning any medal but twice breaking his Philippine records in butterfly in 1988 in Seoul and in 1992 in Barcelona, respectively. Before 1992, he won six gold medals in the 1991 SEA Games to become the toast of the Games. He coached our swimmers in the 2000 Sydney Olympics and, a year later, became PSC chair.

"One can only do so much," said Eric. "The very best will surely be there. You are the best in your country or you won't be sent to the Olympics. When the best of the best clash in the Olympics, victory becomes merely an incidental commodity. It is the battle that ensues among the best of the best that makes the Olympic competition almost an art, if not already an art in itself."

Few people appreciate the fact that in the Olympics, all participants—winners and losers alike—are worthy of our adulation, lusty cheers. Thus, the loser deserves as much applause as the winner. Yes, you don't really win a silver in the Olympics but instead, you lose the gold. But in ending up with the silver, your effort could still be worth the gold you had hoped to win.

I can't blame Eric Buhain, the youthful chair of the Philippine Sports Commission, if he says his heart bleeds when he sees, feels, his countrymen giving our 16 Olympians the cold-shoulder treatment when they came home from Athens empty-handed. Being an athlete himself—a much bemedalled one at that—he sure, knows, the feeling.

"I can feel it," said Eric, who came home from Athens battered but never bewildered and nursing a bad cold from the daily grind he had had to do shadowing our athletes. "And just the thought of it, I feel like fighting back tears. Our athletes, all 16 of them, they really gave it their best shot. Not one among them quit, not even when imminent danger was at hand, such as in the case of both Geisler and Rivero. Even without a medal to show, we must still applaud them. They did their best and if only for that alone, they did the country proud."

Truly, medal or no medal, valor is priceless.

Camel moto returns; 3 Visayas legs slated

CAMEL, which became synonymous with motocross in the early '80s until the late '90s, makes its much-awaited return by staging three motocross events beginning Sept. 19 in the Visayas.

Dubbed as the Camel Supercross Championship Series, the event to be organized by the National Motorcycle Sports and Safety Association (Namssa) and sanctioned by the Federation Internationale de Motorcycliste (FIM) will be held in Roxas City on Sept. 19, Bacolod City on Oct. 10 and Iloilo City on Nov. 28

Expected to take centerstage during the three-part Camel series are the star-studded Shell-Yamaha and Caltex Revtex teams.

"We are happy to be part of the Camel Supercross circuit in 2004," said Camel brand marketing manager Edward Cruz, adding this year's series will mark the 15th year of Camel's support to motocross.

Namssa president Ken Falco noted that most of the country's leading motocross riders, including Jovie Saulog, Jolet Jao, Ernie Leongson and Glen Aguilar, earned their spurs during the Camel-sponsored motocross series from 1985 to 1998.

Falco said the leading Filipino rider in the Pro 125 category after the Roxas and Bacolod legs will earn the right to represent the country in the 2004 FIM Asian Supercross Championships to be held in Macau on Oct. 30-31.

FIM Asian Motocross and Enduro Commission president Macky Carapiet said Filipino riders are ranked highly in Asia and "their participation in Macau will be one of the event's attractions."

He lauded Camel for its decision to support motocross again.

Aside from the Manila-based Shell-Yamaha and Caltex teams, the other teams will come from La Union, Bulacan, Tacloban, Bacolod, Dumaguete, Iloilo, Ormoc, Cebu and Mindanao.

For inquiries about the motocross series, call Carapiet at 0917-8992363.

Senate to boost . . .

From page A19

barrel to the SEAG "to save the nation from embarrassment and keep its international commitment."

He said he would present a resolution to President Arroyo, through the Department of Budget and Management, to earmark 10 percent of the P25 million that was slashed from each of the congressmen's countryside development fund.

The organizers of the SEA Games have estimated the SEAG budget to reach P1 billion, with most of it going to the operational expenses and the repair of facilities. *With a report from Michael Lim Ubac*

CHRIS Nelson (left) and Eric Carandang lead last Friday's launch of the 2004 Marlboro Red Racing School at the World Trade Center on Roxas Boulevard.

MARLBORO RACING

Fresh search for five F-1 fanatics on

DRIVING track-worthy Italian race cars, taking race tips from world-champion drivers and chilling out at the epicenter of Ferrari kingdom in Italy.

To top it all, riding at break-neck speeds of 300 kph on the fastest mode of transportation on four wheels: a special two-seater Formula-1 car.

No school offers this once-in-a-lifetime experience other than the Marlboro Red Racing School (MRRS), which is in the process of choosing the second batch of five Filipinos who will be rewarded with racing's ultimate thrill.

"Marlboro has been associated with racing for a long time," said managing director Chris Nelson of Philip Morris Philippines Manufacturing Inc. (PMPMI).

"And so the thrust of this type of event is to give people a chance to go to Italy and drive a Ferrari, an experience that only a very few, excluding myself, will ever have."

The first batch of five Filipinos who went through the bump and grind of last year's Manila qualifiers spent four days in Italy last July and came back with stories that dreams are made of.

The thrill to end all thrills was riding a Formula-1 two-seater with no less than F1 drivers behind the wheels and navigating the Fiorano circuit at an average speed of more than 300 kph.

To get a slot at this year's MRRS, applicants must be a Filipino citizen residing in the Philippines, 18 years or older as of August 23, 2004, a smoker, have a valid Philippine driver's license and be of sound mind and body.

Interested applicants who satisfy the requirements may get their MRRS sign-up forms from selected key accounts and roving MRRS promo booths located in selected outlets and venues nationwide.

A total of 120 finalists will be chosen to participate in the Marlboro Red Racing Philippines National Finals scheduled between Oct. 18 and 24—a three-day activity which will combine classroom training, hands-on carting sessions and a number of team-building activities.

The top-five highest scorers will be selected to form the second Philippine contingent to the MRRS in Italy.

"We want to expand on what we did last year by making more people aware that there is this type of once-in-a-lifetime chance," said Nelson. "The first batch was so impressed and thrilled.

"We'll just try to build on the experiences. And I think that will help to promote the school."

Added Eric Carandang, PMPMI's marketing director: "Beside the skills, we look for somebody with the passion who values team work and enjoys the company of other people because when they go to Italy, they will be meeting people from other countries."

Last year's batch was composed of a restaurateur, two businessmen, a sales and marketing manager and a musician—a testament to the diversity of Team Marlboro Philippines and proof that anybody who wants to join has a chance as good as others.

"The dream of F1 in Italy is within everybody's reach," said Nelson. "It's not only for those who are experts in driving or those who have experience in driving. It's for those who have a dream."

Alvin takes…

From page A20

and further extend his number of consecutive games played now running at 590.

Pardo said the team needs another player to complement Raymundo and Limpot in the middle.

An INQUIRER source said the Hotdogs are eyeing either Omanzie Rodriguez of FedEx or Red Bull's Enrico Villanueva to fill the vacuum in the area.

Meanwhile, FedEx-Air21 chair Bert Lina has expressed desire to help the Basketball Association of the Philippines and the PBA form a viable partnership for the sake of the national team in future international events.

A highly reliable source said Lina, owner of the FedEx Express, is willing to spearhead negotiations between the BAP and PBA in forming a competitive team not only for the Asian Games but also for the ABC championships as well.

Two Olympic slots are up for grabs in the ABC.

In another development, Talk 'N Text has signed former University of Santo Tomas standout Nino Gelig to a one-year deal.

Federer up vs Agassi in quarters

NEW YORK—Four days of rest in between US Open matches might have been just what Roger Federer needs as he takes the court on Wednesday for a quarterfinal encounter against Andre Agassi.

"I have enough days off," said Federer, who benefited from a walkover in the round of 16. "Now I'll be a hundred percent physically, so that is an advantage.

"It will be a tough match," said Federer.

The Swiss has won the last three meetings between the two tennis giants after Agassi captured the first three.

The last time they met was in the final in Indian Wells earlier this year with Federer coming out on top, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

"It is definitely nice to play him, especially in New York," Federer said.

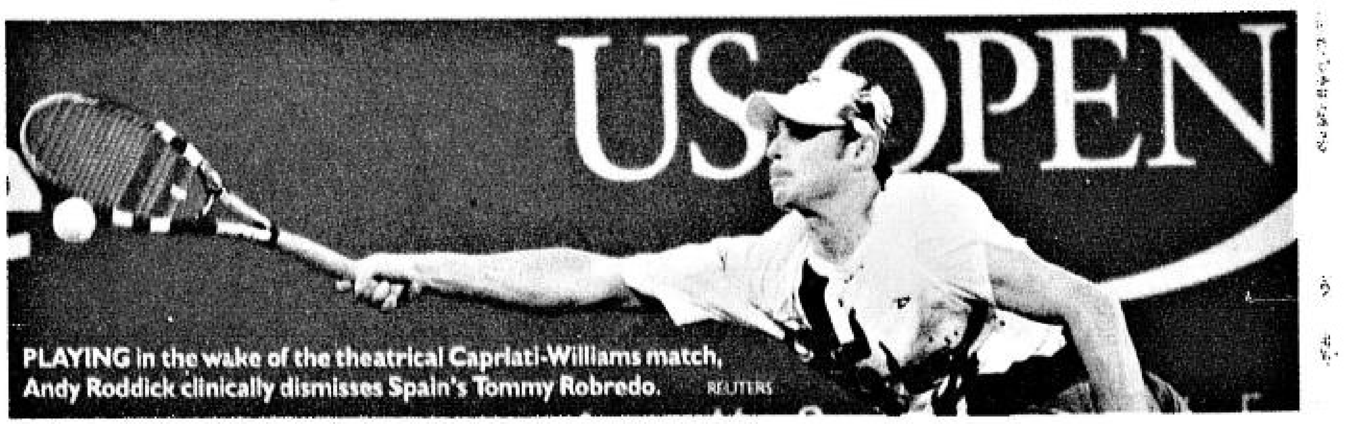
"It's going to be a good contrast—me trying to mix it up and him trying to not overpower me but kind of, you know, always get a hit, hit it harder, longer and stronger until I go away."

Federer has won three of the past five Grand Slams but this is the major that has given him the most trouble as he has lost in the fourth round each of the last three years.

"I've never really played the real big matches here at the Open, especially night sessions," Federer said.

Federer is attempting to become the first man to win three Grand Slam titles in one year since Sweden's Mats Wilander in 1988. *AFP*

US OPEN



PLAYING in the wake of the theatrical Capriati-Williams match, Andy Roddick clinically dismisses Spain's Tommy Robredo. REUTERS

Serena bows out

WILLIAMS REUTERS

NEW YORK—Unfairly, unbelievably, Serena Williams was robbed of a point by an umpire's mistake at the US Open, just like her sister was at Wimbledon.

It happened in the opening game of the third set between Williams and Jennifer Capriati, who went on to win their Open quarterfinal, 2-6, 6-4, 6-4, Tuesday night.

"I'm very angry and bitter right now. I felt cheated. Shall I go on? I just feel robbed," a composed Williams said, laughing a bit. "At first, I thought it was another Wimbledon conspiracy."

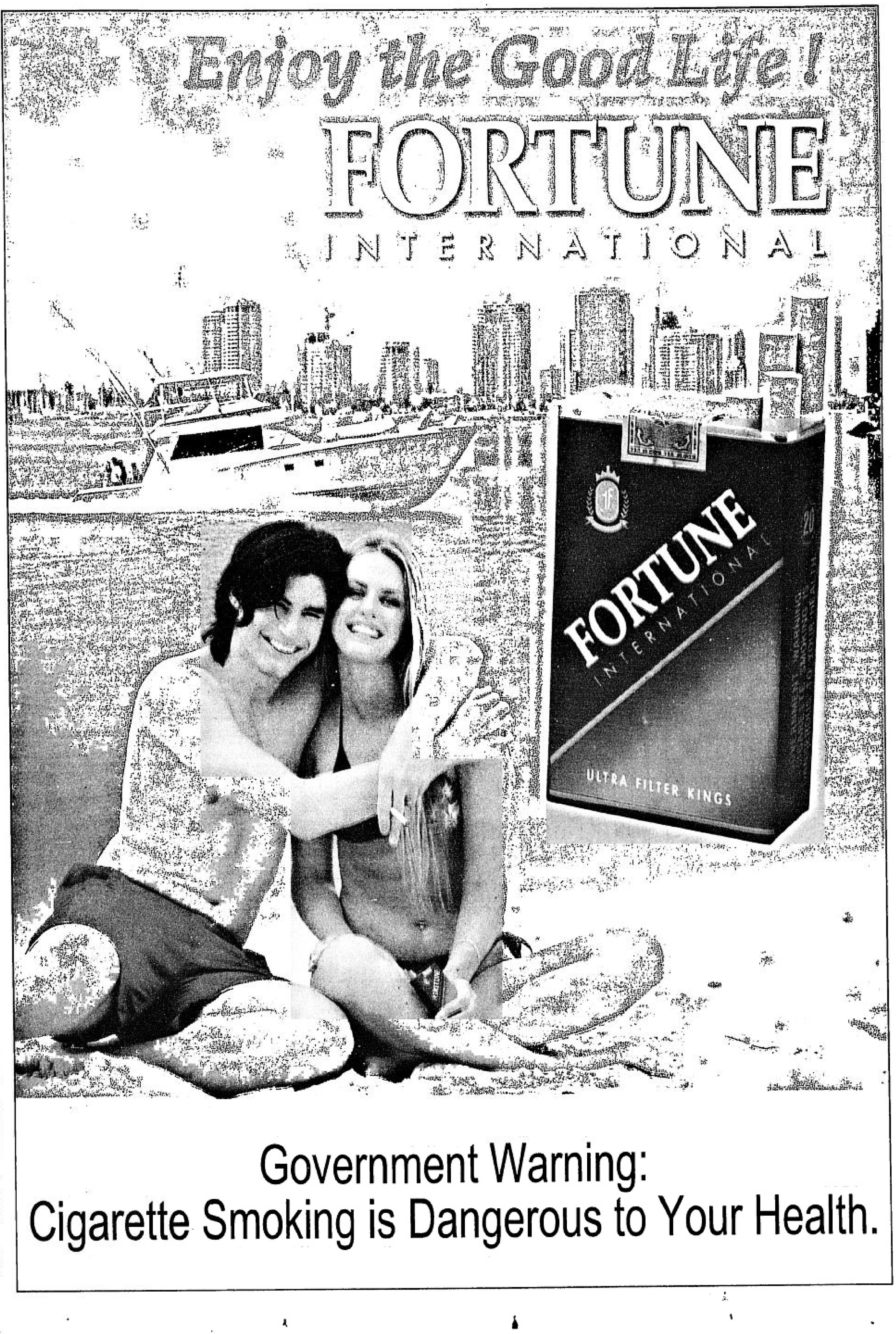
In the semifinals, the eighth-seeded Capriati will face No. 6 Elena Dementieva of Russia, who outlasted No. 2 Amelie Mauresmo of France, 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (1), in a match marred by 24 double-faults, 82 unforced errors, 36 break points, and 14 service breaks.

Williams-Capriati, full of theatrics, was followed in Arthur Ashe Stadium by defending champion Andy Roddick's 6-3, 6-2, 6-4 win over Spain's Tommy Robredo. Roddick hasn't dropped a set on the way to the quarterfinals, where he faces No. 28 Joachim Johansson of Sweden, who defeated Michael Llodra of France, 6-2, 6-3, 6-2.

Earlier, 2001 Open winner Lleyton Hewitt of Australia beat Karol Beck, 6-4, 6-2, 6-2, for his 14th consecutive win, and Tommy Haas of Germany beat Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic, 7-6 (6), 6-1, 7-5.

Capriati played superbly, without a doubt, but what always will be remembered is the miscue by chair umpire Mariana Alves of Portugal. She awarded the point to Capriati after Williams hit a backhand that landed in—and was ruled good by the line judge.

"I don't need to see the replay. I know my shots. Not only was it in, it wasn't even near the line," said Williams, who couldn't defend her 2002 Open title because of left knee surgery that forced her to miss eight months. *AP*



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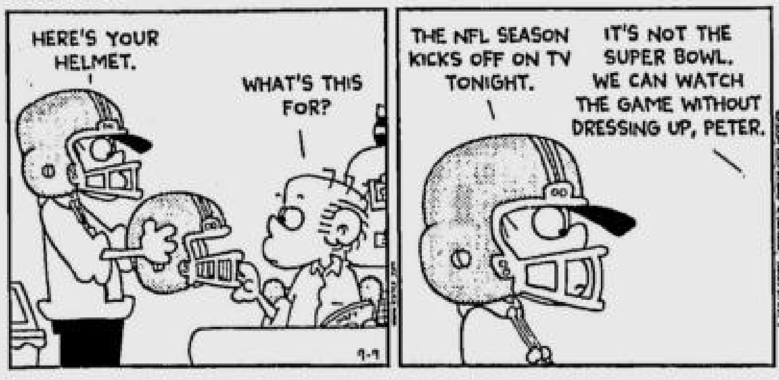
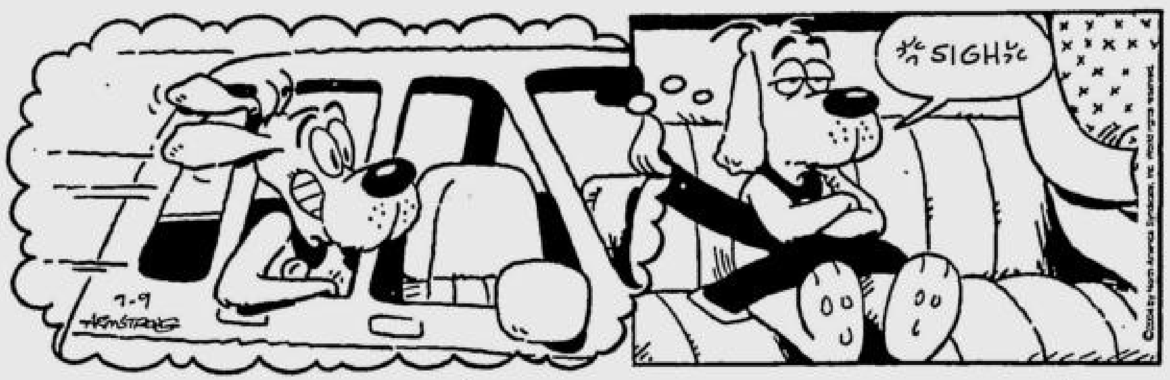
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2004

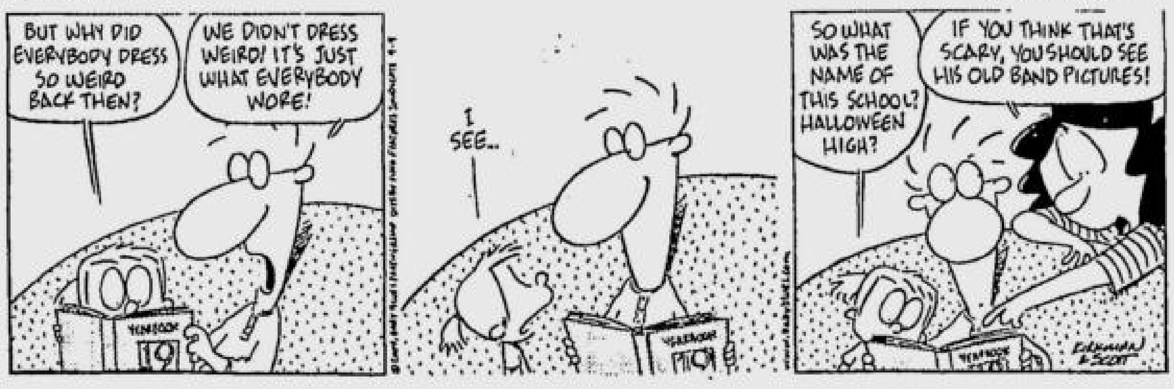
FOXTROT BY BILL AMEND


HERE'S YOUR HELMET.
WHAT'S THIS FOR?
THE NFL SEASON KICKS OFF ON TV TONIGHT.
IT'S NOT THE SUPER BOWL. WE CAN WATCH THE GAME WITHOUT DRESSING UP, PETER.
PAIGE CLAIMS SHE HAS DIBS ON THE TV.
HMM. WE MIGHT NEED SOME SHOULDER PADS, TOO, THEN.
9-9
AMEND

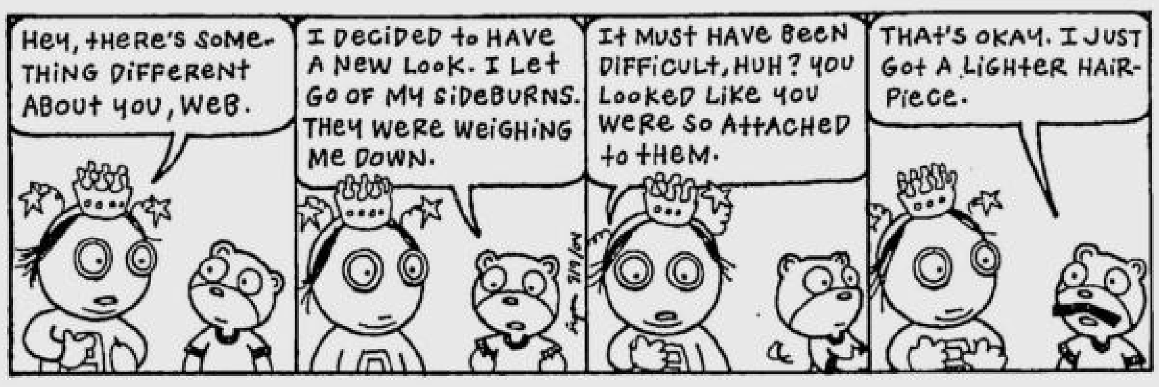
MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG


SIGH
7-9
ARMSTRONG

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT


BUT WHY DID EVERYBODY DRESS SO WEIRD BACK THEN?
WE DIDN'T DRESS WEIRD! IT'S JUST WHAT EVERYBODY WORE!
I SEE..
SO WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THIS SCHOOL? HALLOWEEN HIGH?
IF YOU THINK THAT'S SCARY, YOU SHOULD SEE HIS OLD BAND PICTURES!
YEARBOOK
19
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO


Hey, there's something different about you, Web.
I decided to have a new look. I let go of my sideburns. They were weighing me down.
It must have been difficult, huh? You looked like you were so attached to them.
That's okay. I just got a lighter hairpiece.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a fine, discriminating mind. You can't resist a challenge because you find it rewarding and satisfying to constantly prove yourself. Your intelligent, introspective nature makes you romantically appealing to others. (You're very private.) It's important to maintain your self-respect in all things. The year ahead will be friendly and more sociable. Partnerships are blessed!
Birthdate of: Adam Sandler, actor; Hugh Grant, actor; Macy Gray, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You want to make creative changes on the job. This is because you love to pioneer reform and improvement around you.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Parents must avoid serious power struggles with children today. This will simply bring you down to the level of being a child. You are the adult. Demonstrate patience and loving concern.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Power struggles with partners or family members are quite likely . Try to remember what your overall objective is. Getting angry won't help you get there.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): You might actually be the victim of somebody's ruthless efforts to convince you of something or to sell you something. Don't let this happen to you. Stand your ground.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Don't be pushy about financial issues today. You might lose perspective about what you really want. (Perhaps your ego is threatened far more than your pocketbook?)

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Your energy level is high today. You might have to confront somebody who opposes you. Try to make your success the success of others. (Don't push the river.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Avoid dangerous places and violent people today. This is a day that is susceptible to crime and dangerous activities. Stay away from alleys and dark streets.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): A friend might try to convince you of something today. Possibly, it's vice versa. Don't approach this conversation as being a win-lose situation.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): It's easy to arouse opposition to your ideas today, whether you intend this to happen or not. Be careful, because you might be overpowered. Try to avoid confrontation if you can.

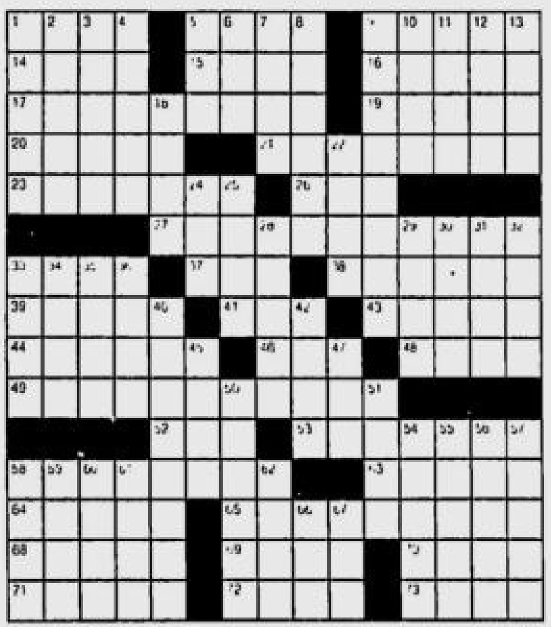
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Don't try to coerce others into agreeing with your political or religious ideas. And don't let anybody else do this to you, either. Live and let live.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Tension about shared possessions is likely today. This is a very poor day to divide something that is jointly owned. (People feel territorial and possessive.)

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Avoid the temptation to be ruthless, sneaky or dishonest today, no matter how much you think somebody deserves this kind of treatment. It will backfire! Play it aboveboard all the way.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Shafts of light
5 Hardy cabbage
9 Shred
14 Thanks __!
15 March middle
16 Subterfuges
17 Start of Paul Newman quote
19 At hand
20 Brook fish
21 Wholesome
23 Having a will
26 Gratuity
27 Part 2 of quote
33 Ocean extract
37 Liveliness
38 Travel with difficulty
39 Attempts
41 Mayday!
43 Blockade
44 Intermediaries
46 Audit pro
48 Coarse file
49 Part 3 of quote
52 Chairman of China
53 Ungenerous
58 One between 12 and 20
63 Sri __
64 Playful prank
65 End of quote
68 Hunt illegally
69 Dynamic lead-in?
70 Huron/Ontario separator
71 Bob of the PGA
72 Top of the head
73 "Sixteen __"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By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
9/9/04

DOWN
1 "Something to Talk About" singer Bonnie
2 Actress Woodard
3 Walk-the-dog toys
4 Nero Wolfe's creator
5 "__ Galahad"
6 Bother
7 Camera accessory
8 Real follower?
9 Atlantic food fish
10 Littlest of the litter
11 '30s movie dog
12 Rip
13 Catch sight of
18 Provo's state
22 Bellybutton collection
24 Light pat
25 Holiday forerunners
28 Historical period
29 Ecology pioneer
30 Conception
31 Henhouse product
32 Ooze
33 Length of a visit
34 Jason's ship
35 Stead
36 Take care of
40 Stopovers on the alimentary canal
42 Health resorts
45 Hosiery mishap
47 Latin greeting
50 Work-shoe protection
51 Ms. Fitzgerald
54 Gem surface
55 Opening bars
56 Flock of geese
57 Rabbits' kin
58 CD alternative
59 Seth's son
60 Coup d'__
61 Pleasant French city?
62 Perlman of "Cheers"
66 Museum purchase
67 Sturgeon delicacy

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

S	C	A	M	P	■	L	A	D	S	■	S	H	O	P
L	U	G	E	R	■	E	D	I	T	■	W	O	W	S
A	R	E	N	A	■	W	E	A	R	■	A	U	N	T
C	I	N	D	Y	W	I	L	L	I	A	M	S	■	■
K	A	T	■	E	A	S	E	■	F	L	I	E	R	S
■	■	■	O	R	K	■	■	P	E	I	■	H	A	W
C	M	O	N	■	E	S	A	U	■	B	I	O	T	A
L	A	V	E	R	N	E	&	S	H	I	R	L	E	Y
A	C	E	L	A	■	N	E	H	I	■	O	D	D	S
R	R	R	■	V	A	T	■	■	K	E	N	■	■	■
K	O	S	H	E	R	■	E	V	E	R	■	K	G	B
■	■	P	E	N	N	Y	M	A	R	S	H	A	L	L
A	P	E	X	■	O	O	P	S	■	A	E	R	I	E
M	I	N	A	■	L	U	T	E	■	T	R	A	D	E
B	U	D	D	■	D	R	Y	S	■	Z	O	N	E	D

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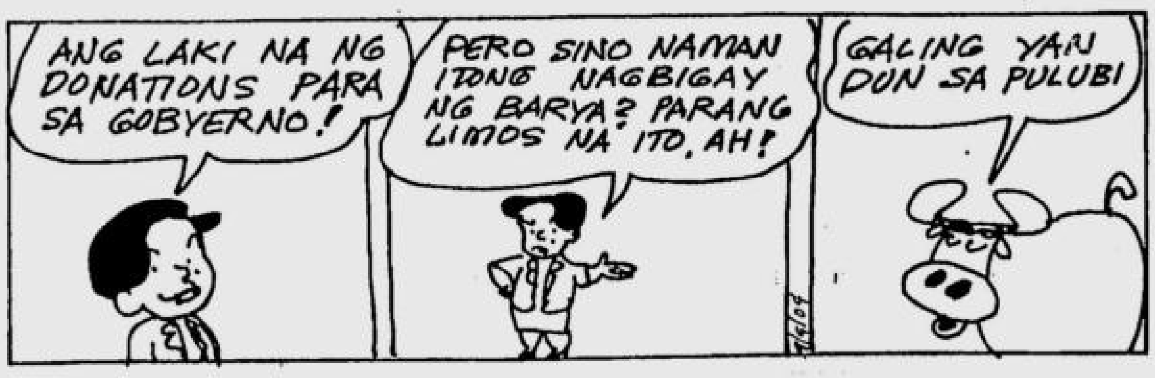
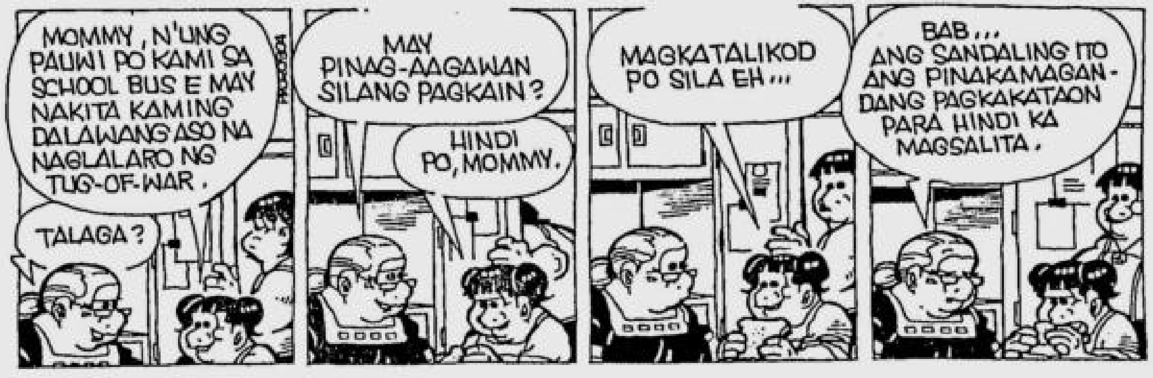
9/8/04

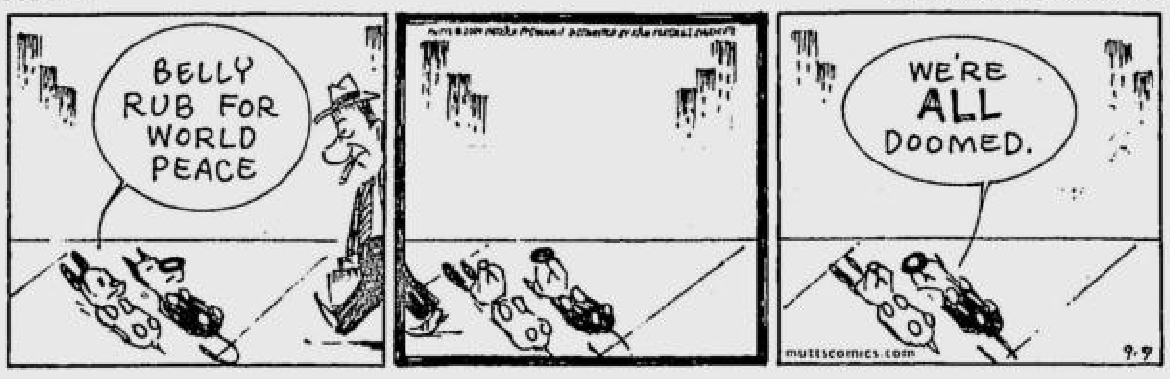
A. LIPIN BY JESS ABRERA


ANG LAKI NA NG DONATIONS PARA SA GOBYERNO!
PERO SINO NAMAN ITONG NAGBIGAY NG BARYA? PARANG LIMOS NA ITO, AH!
GALING YAN DUN SA PULUBI

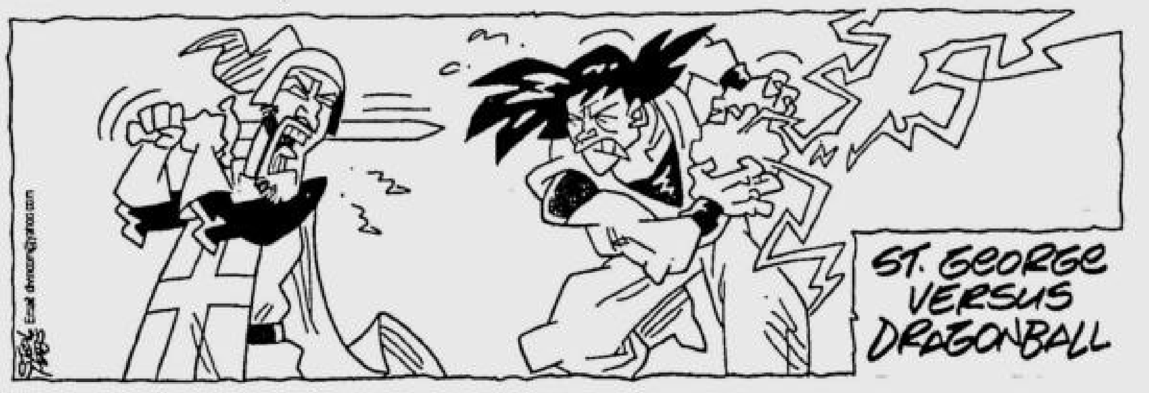
PUGAD BABOY BY P.M. JUNIOR


MOMMY, N'UNG PAUWI PO KAMI SA SCHOOL BUS E MAY NAKITA KAMING DALAWANG ASO NA NAGLALARO NG TUG-OF-WAR.
TALAGA?
MAY PINAG-AAGAWAN SILANG PAGKAIN?
HINDI PO, MOMMY.
MAGKATALIKOD PO SILA EH...
BAB... ANG SANDALING ITO ANG PINAKAMAGANDANG PAGKAKATAON PARA HINDI KA MAGSALITA.

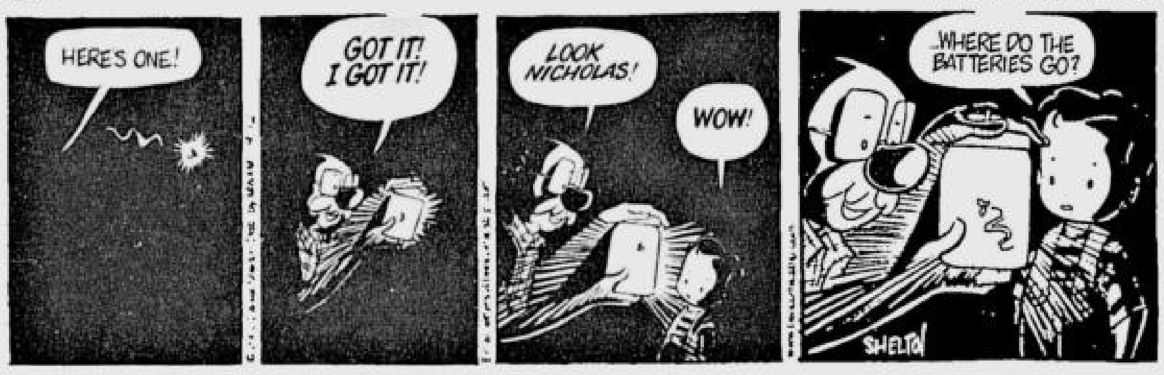
MUTTS BY PATRICK McDONNELL


BELLY RUB FOR WORLD PEACE
WE'RE ALL DOOMED.
muttscomics.com
9-9

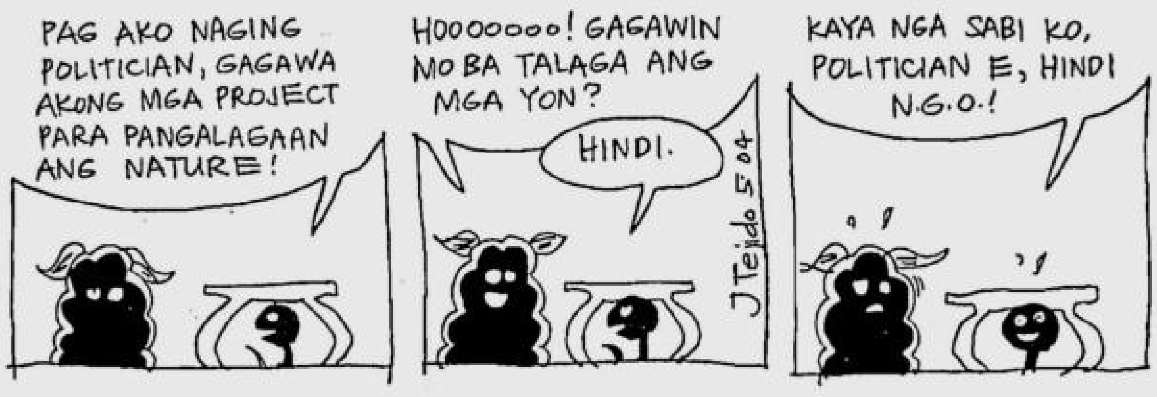
DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PABALINAS


ST. GEORGE VERSUS DRAGONBALL

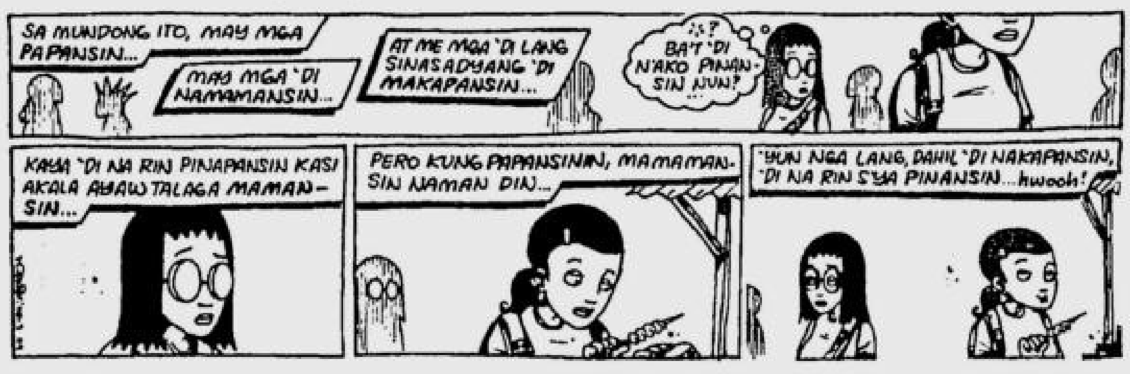
BEN BY DANIEL SHELTON


HERE'S ONE!
GOT IT! I GOT IT!
LOOK NICHOLAS!
WOW!
...WHERE DO THE BATTERIES GO?
SHELTON

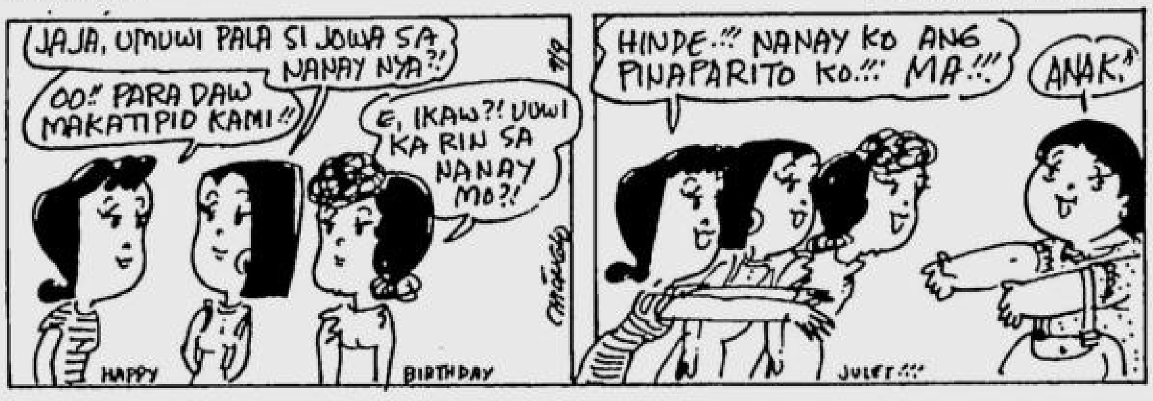
MIKROKOSMOS BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


PAG AKO NAGING POLITICIAN, GAGAWA AKONG MGA PROJECT PARA PANGALAGAAN ANG NATURE!
HOOOOOOO! GAGAWIN MO BA TALAGA ANG MGA YON?
HINDI.
J Tejido 5 04
KAYA NGA SABI KO, POLITICIAN E, HINDI N.G.O.!

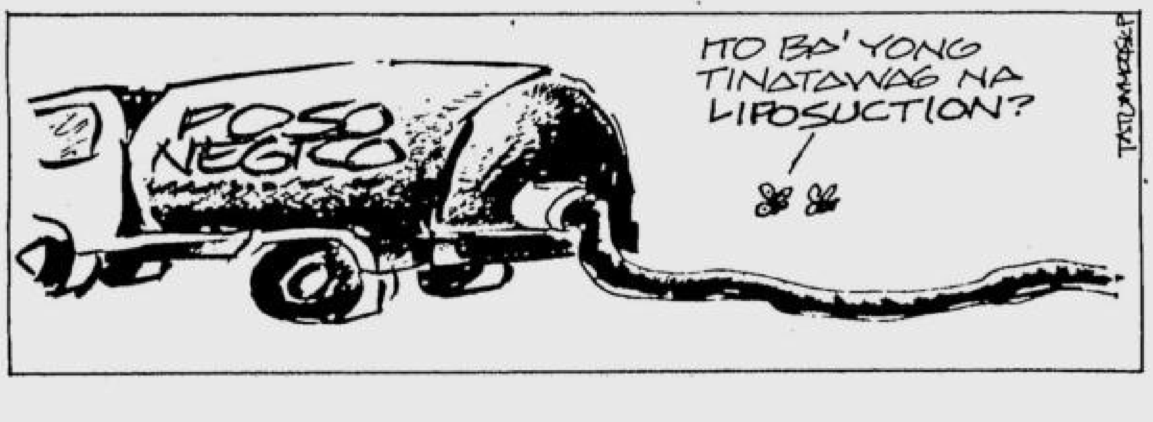
KIKO MACHINE BY MANIX ABRERA


SA MUNDONG ITO, MAY MGA PAPANSIN...
MAY MGA 'DI NAMAMANSIN...
AT ME MGA 'DI LANG SINASADYANG 'DI MAKAPANSIN...
BAT 'DI N'AKO PINANSIN NUN?
KAYA 'DI NA RIN PINAPANSIN KASI AKALA AYAW TALAGA MAMANSIN...
PERO KUNG PAPANSININ, MAMAMANSIN NAMAN DIN...
'YUN NGA LANG, DAHIL 'DI NAKAPANSIN, 'DI NA RIN S'YA PINANSIN... hwooh!

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


JAJA, UMUWI PALA SI JOWA SA NANAY NYA?!
OO!! PARA DAW MAKATIPID KAMI!!
E, IKAW?! UUWI KA RIN SA NANAY MO?!
HAPPY BIRTHDAY
HINDE..!! NANAY KO ANG PINAPARITO KO..!! MA..!!
ANAK!
JULET..!!

TULDOK BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


POSO NEGRO
ITO BA 'YONG TINATAWAG NA LIPOSUCTION?

moVietime at SM CINEMA

NOW SHOWING

Central

SM MEGAMALL
6331901

1 ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
2 DODGEBALL
3 THE TERMINAL
4 GODSEND
5 TOOLBOX MURDERS
6 CINE EUROPA
7 HAUNTED SPIRIT 2
8 PRINCESS DIARIES 2
9 THE NOTEBOOK
10 ANACONDAS
11 CONNIE AND CARLA
12 LAWS OF ATTRACTION

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9350749

1 CONNIE AND CARLA
2 NOW THAT I HAVE YOU
3 ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
4 ANACONDAS
5 GODSEND
6 THE NOTEBOOK
7 DODGEBALL
8 PRINCESS DIARIES 2
9 THE TERMINAL
10 SUPER SIZE ME
11 BANGKOK HAUNTED 2
12 TOOLBOX MURDERS

SM CITY MANILA
5239240

1 THE TERMINAL
2 THE NOTEBOOK
3 PRINCESS DIARIES 2
4 TOOLBOX MURDERS
5 DODGEBALL
6 ANACONDAS
7 GODSEND
8 HAUNTED SPIRIT 2
9 ANACONDAS
10 I, ROBOT
11 ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
12 LAWS OF ATTRACTION

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
9295452

1 TOOLBOX MURDERS
2 PRINCESS DIARIES 2
3 HAUNTED SPIRIT 2
4 THE NOTEBOOK
5 THE TERMINAL
6 DODGEBALL
7 ANACONDAS
8 GODSEND

SM CITY STA. MESA
7149522 • 7161416

1 PRINCESS DIARIES 2
2 TOOLBOX MURDERS
3 THE TERMINAL
4 GODSEND
5 ANACONDAS
6 NOW THAT I HAVE YOU
7 DODGEBALL
8 ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
9 THE NOTEBOOK
10 COLLATERAL

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN
2514302

1 ANACONDAS
2 GODSEND
3 THE TERMINAL
4 TOOLBOX MURDERS

North

SM CITY MARILAO
(044) 933 2013 to 17

1 THE ALAMO
2 LAWS OF ATTRACTION
3 ANACONDAS
4 THUNDERBIRDS

SM CITY PAMPANGA
7128015

1 ANACONDAS
2 CONNIE AND CARLA
3 BANGKOK HAUNTED 2
4 PRINCESS DIARIES 2
5 LAWS OF ATTRACTION
6 THUNDERBIRDS

SM CITY BAGUIO
(074) 4464505

1 ANACONDAS
2 DEAD PEOPLE
3 THE TERMINAL
4 THUNDERBIRDS

South

SM CITY LAS PIÑAS
8066888

1 DODGEBALL
2 PRINCESS DIARIES
3 ANACONDAS
4 THE TERMINAL
5 BANGKOK HAUNTED 2
6 ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
7 TOOLBOX MURDERS
8 GODSEND
9 THE NOTEBOOK
10 HAUNTED SPIRIT 2

SM CITY BICUTAN
7763055

1 ANACONDAS
2 THE TERMINAL
3 DODGEBALL
4 GODSEND

SM SUPER CENTER SUCAT
8294975

1 DODGEBALL
2 THE TERMINAL
3 ANACONDAS
4 GODSEND

SM CITY BACOOR
(046)4173868

1 DODGEBALL
2 THE TERMINAL
3 ANACONDAS
4 TOOLBOX MURDERS
5 ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
6 PRINCESS DIARIES 2
7 THE NOTEBOOK
8 NOW THAT I HAVE YOU

SM CITY DASMA
(046) 4323201-04

1 THUNDERBIRDS
2 THE TERMINAL
3 TOOLBOX MURDERS
4 ANACONDAS

SM CITY LUCENA
(042) 7100977-80

1 THUNDERBIRDS
2 STEPFORD WIVES
3 DEAD PEOPLE
4 ETERNAL SUNSHINE

Visayas & Mindanao

SM CITY CEBU
(032) 2313876

1 SYLVIA
2 PRINCESS DIARIES 2
3 STEPFORD WIVES
4 CONNIE AND CARLA
5 CINDERELLA STORY
6 BANGKOK HAUNTED 2
7 LAWS OF ATTRACTION
8 ANACONDAS

SM CITY ILOILO
(033) 3209422

1 SUPER SIZE ME
2 RESERVED
3 PRINCESS DIARIES 2
4 CINDERELLA STORY
5 STEPFORD WIVES
6 RING: THE SPIRAL
7 RESERVED
8 ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

SM CITY DAVAO
(082) 2976998

1 ANACONDAS
2 BANGKOK HAUNTED 2
3 THE ALAMO
4 STEPFORD WIVES
5 LAWS OF ATTRACTION
6 PRINCESS DIARIES 2

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO (088) 8582884

1 WEREWOLF: GINGERSNAPS 2
2 A WHOLE 10 YARDS
3 PRINCESS DIARIES 2
4 THUNDERBIRDS

—THE— PODIUM CINEMA

1
THE TERMINAL
11:50 FS/12:20 MF/3:00/5:40/ 8:20/10:30 LFS/ 10:50 LMF/1:10 END

2
DODGEBALL
11:25 FS/11:55 MF /2:05/4:15/6:25/ 8:35/10:15 LFS/ 10:45 LMF/12:25 END

For Seat Reservation, call 633 8976
LATE NIGHT SCREENING DURING FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS

THE EUROPEAN UNION

SM CINEMA

CINE EUROPA 7
THE BIGGER PICTURE
FREE ADMISSION!

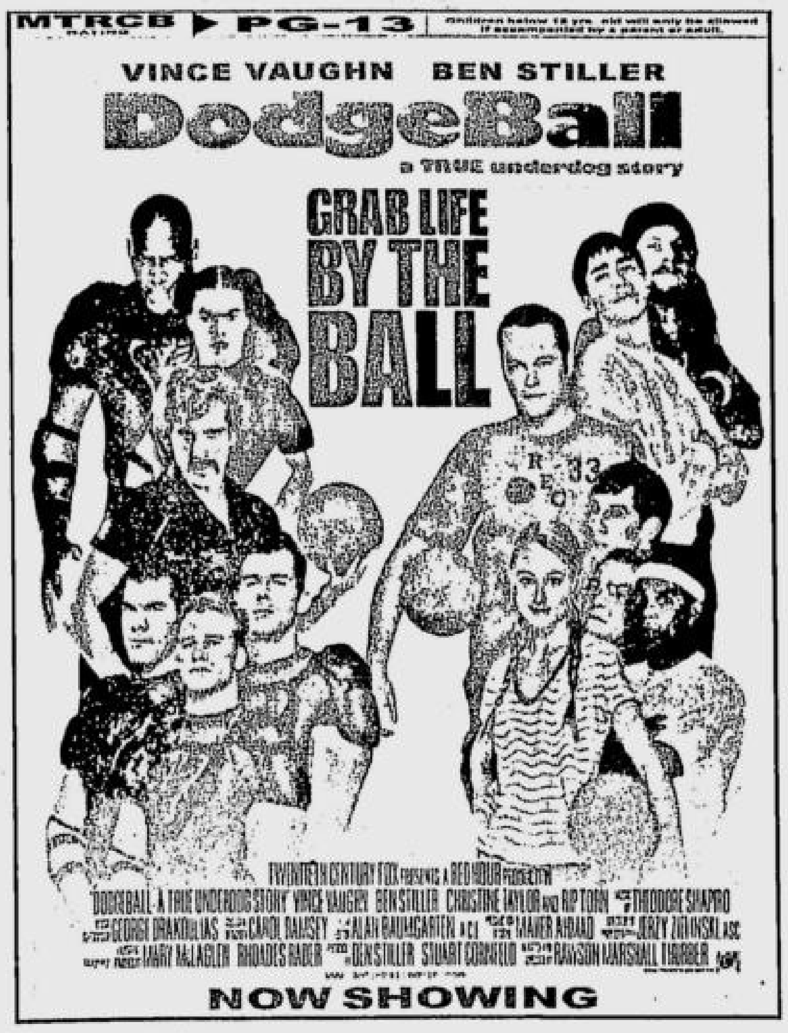
SEPTEMBER 2-12
SM MEGAMALL CINEMA 6

Featuring contemporary and critically-acclaimed films from:
AUSTRIA • BELGIUM • CZECH REPUBLIC • FINLAND
FRANCE • GERMANY • ITALY • THE NETHERLANDS
PORTUGAL • SPAIN SWEDEN • UNITED KINGDOM

SMART EPSON

SEPTEMBER 9 · THURSDAY		
BELGIUM 2 SEA OF SILENCE PG-13	CZECH DIVIDED WE FALL PG-13	AUSTRIA ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BRIDGE PG-13
4:30pm	7:00pm	9:30pm

Movies are subject to change without prior notice


MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13
Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult.
VINCE VAUGHN BEN STILLER
DodgeBall
a TRUE underdog story
GRAB LIFE BY THE BALL
TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX PRESENTS A RED HOUR PRODUCTION
"DODGEBALL: A TRUE UNDERDOG STORY" VINCE VAUGHN BEN STILLER CHRISTINE TAYLOR AND RIP TORN
NOW SHOWING

BOYS IN THE BAND. 8th of March is composed of (clockwise from above left) Cholo, Owen, Bruce and Fort.

MMTA
METRO MANILA THEATERS ASSOCIATION

MOVIE GUIDE

NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX
6th floor Shangrila Plaza EDSA corner Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City
Telephone: 633.2227 / 6337851 loc. 171

1 (DOLBY) THE NOTEBOOK
PG-13 / FS : 12:30PM, 3:15PM, 6:00PM, LMF: 8:55PM
2 (DOLBY) THE TERMINAL
GP / FS : 11:00AM, 1:40PM, 4:20PM, 7:00PM LMF: 9:40PM
3 (DOLBY) PRINCESS DIARIES 2
GP /FS : 11:30AM, 2:05PM, 4:40PM, 7:15PM LMF: 9:50PM
4 (DOLBY) DODGEBALL
PG-13 / FS : 12:10PM, 2:25PM, 4:40PM, 6:55PM LMF: 9:10PM

PREMIERE

(DOLBY) ANACONDAS
PG-13 / FS: 12:50PM, 3:05PM, 5:20PM, 7:35PM, LMF: 9:50PM

isetann SUPER CINERAMA
CINERAMA COMPLEX RECTO
tel 733.4238

1. (DOLBY) TOOLBOX MURDER
2. ANACONDAS
3. TAG-INIT
4. THE TERMINAL
5. DODGEBALL

Gotesco Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781

1
2 MEDALLION
3 NAGDADALAGA
4 (SDDS) TAG-INIT
5 THE TERMINAL
6 (DOLBY) DODGEBALL
7 (DTS) ANACONDAS
8 RESERVE
9 RESERVE

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274

1 THE TERMINAL
2 ANACONDAS
3 TAG-INIT

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986

1 RESERVE
2 RESERVE
3 TAG-INIT
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) ANACONDAS
5 GODSEND

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Alabang) tel 850.4285

1 YOUNG VIRGIN
2 TAG-INIT
3 TOOLBOX MURDER
4 GODSEND
5 (DOLBY) ANACONDAS
6 DODGEBALL

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Las Pinas) tel (047) 237.7007

1 (DOLBY) ANACONDAS
2 BOLD AFFAIR

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72

1 (DDS) GODSEND
2 (SDDS) ANACONDAS
3 (DTS) THE TERMINAL
4 GOLD (DTS) DODGEBALL
5 GOLD (DOLBY) THE NOTEBOOK
6 GOLD (SDDS) THE TERMINAL
7 GOLD (DOLBY) ANACONDAS
8 [illegible] TOOLBOX MURDER
9 [illegible] HAUNTED SPIRIT
10 [illegible] PRINCESS DIARIES 2

THE CENTER OF ENTERTAINMENT
Araneta Center
ALI MALL CINEPLEX
Tel. 911-3101 loc. 8242 / 8281 / 8397

3 (Dolby) ANACONDAS
4 (SDDS) THE TERMINAL
5 (DTS) DODGEBALL
6 (Dolby) TOOL BOX MURDER
7 (Dolby) GODSEND

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1 ANACONDAS
2 DODGEBALL
3 TAG-INIT
4 TOOLBOX MURDER

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

1 (DOLBY EX) OPENS SEPTEMBER 16, 2004
2 OPENS SEPTEMBER 16, 2004
3 (DTS EX) OPENS SEPTEMBER 16, 2004
4 OPENS SEPTEMBER 16, 2004

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121

1 ELLA ENCHANTED
2 AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS
3 (DOLBY) ANACONDAS
4 (DTS) STEPFORD WIVES

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489

1 DEAD PEOPLE
2 WEREWOLF (GINGER SNAP-2)
3 (DOLBY) CONNIE & CARLA
4 (DTS) ALIEN VS, PREDATOR

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1 THE CINDERELLA STORY
2 STEPFORD WIVES

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
tel 687.6963 or 72

1 (DOLBY) THE TERMINAL
2 (DOLBY) THE NOTEBOOK
3 (DOLBY) ANACONDAS
4 (DOLBY) DODGEBALL

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa, Laguna) tel (049) 837.0926

1 STEPFORD WIVES
2 THE TERMINAL
3 (DTS) ANACONDAS

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1 STEPFORD WIVES
2 (DTS) THE TERMINAL
3 (DOLBY) ANACONDAS
4 RING - 0

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1 BULLETS
2 (DOLBY) ANACONDAS
3 (DTS) THE TERMINAL
4 STEPFORD WIVES

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1 WEREWOLF (GINGER SNAP-2)
2 CHRONICLE OF RIDDICK
3 (DOLBY) ALIEN VS, PREDATOR

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729

1 EVE
2 ETERNAL SUNSHINE
3 (DOLBY) PRINCESS DIARIES-2
4 (DTS) ALIEN VS, PREDATOR

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 7953320

1 ANACONDAS
2 PRINCESS DIARIES-2
3 (DOLBY) ALIEN VS, PREDATOR

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS) WILD BUTTERFLY
2 SUGAT
3 TAG-INIT
4 (DTS) ETERNAL SUNSHINE

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY) ANACONDAS
2 HAMOG
3 (DTS) THE TERMINAL
4 STEPFORD WIVES
5 DARK DANCER

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283

1 SPIRAL
2 THE CINDERELLA STORY
3 (DTS) ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
4 (DOLBY) HOUSE OF THE DEAD

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1 SURUM
2 DODGEBALL
3 HAMOG
4 PRINCESS DIARIES-2

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

1 TAG-INIT
2 ANACONDAS

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

SHOW TIME

8th of March mall tour

THE 8TH of March will perform in a series of mall shows in and out of Metro Manila to promote their latest self-titled CD album, produced by Octave Music and sold at leading music retail shops.

The series kicks off on Saturday, Sept. 11, at the Araneta Square in Monumento, Caloocan City.

The group's tour will also cover SM North Edsa on Sept. 18; Malabon Citisquare, Sept. 19; SM Marilao, Sept. 24; SM Bacoor, Sept. 25; SM Southmall, Sept. 26; SM Fairview, Sept. 30.

SM Sucat, Oct. 2; SM Damariñas, Oct. 3; SM Davao, Oct. 8; SM Cebu, Oct. 9; SM Iloilo, Oct. 10; SM Pampanga, Oct. 15; SM Cagayan de Oro, Oct. 16; SM Bicutan, Oct. 17; and SM Lucena, Oct. 22.

In each mall that 8th of March will visit, the group will perform their most applauded numbers in their regular gigs at music bars as well as cuts from their latest self-titled album, including its carrier single, "By the Way... I Love You Still."

A songwriting collaboration of Nino Regalado and Edith Gallardo, "By the Way... I Love You Still" is currently among the top five OPM singles in the charts of Manila's top rated FM pop stations WRR, Love Radio, Yes FM, and I-FM.

The 8th of March CD is a combination of new OPM and covers of some of the most unforgettable hits of the past. The album also includes the works of the most sought after songwriters: Markel Luna, Mark Lopez, Andre Castillo, Moy Ortiz, Edith Gallardo, Nino Regalado and Babsie Molina.

The 8th of March is composed of Cholo Kahiwat, Owen Sarmiento, Fort Dayao and Bruce Mercado, four good looking young men whose music makes the band worth watching.

Turn-offs on TV

From page A26

themselves, instead of concentrating on the characters they're being paid to convincingly portray.

The problem worsens when non-entertainment talents, like newscasters, also mistakenly believe that they are "stars," and no longer focus on the news at hand.

- Show biz luminaries who proudly announce that they are pregnant without the benefit of marriage.
- Mature actresses who admit that they've fallen for younger men. To make things worse, most of the boy toys are married.
- Has-beens or insignificant luminaries who go on TV to messily fight with each other because they're *kulang sa pansin,* or want to boost their flagging careers with controversy and scandal. They pollute the video environment with their lurid and pathetic antics.

Compounding the problem, the program hosts goad the combatants to greater heights of fury, just to make their shows more controversial.

Let's hope that our young viewers realize that these erring TV talents and guests should be scorned rather than emulated.

Pop quiz: Who to you are the *good* role models on local TV today?

'Nginiiig!'

AT 5 p.m. this Saturday on Channel 2's "Nginiiig!," Viva Hot Babe Gwen Garci recounts her experience with an admirer from beyond the grave. And Jaycee Parker claims that she's being haunted by the apparitions of a decapitated head.

Mark Bautista

WHEN he turned 21 last Aug. 10, singer Mark Bautista opted to celebrate his natal day with the wards of the White Cross Children's Home in San Juan.

TURN-OFFS/ A25

OPENS SEPTEMBER 15
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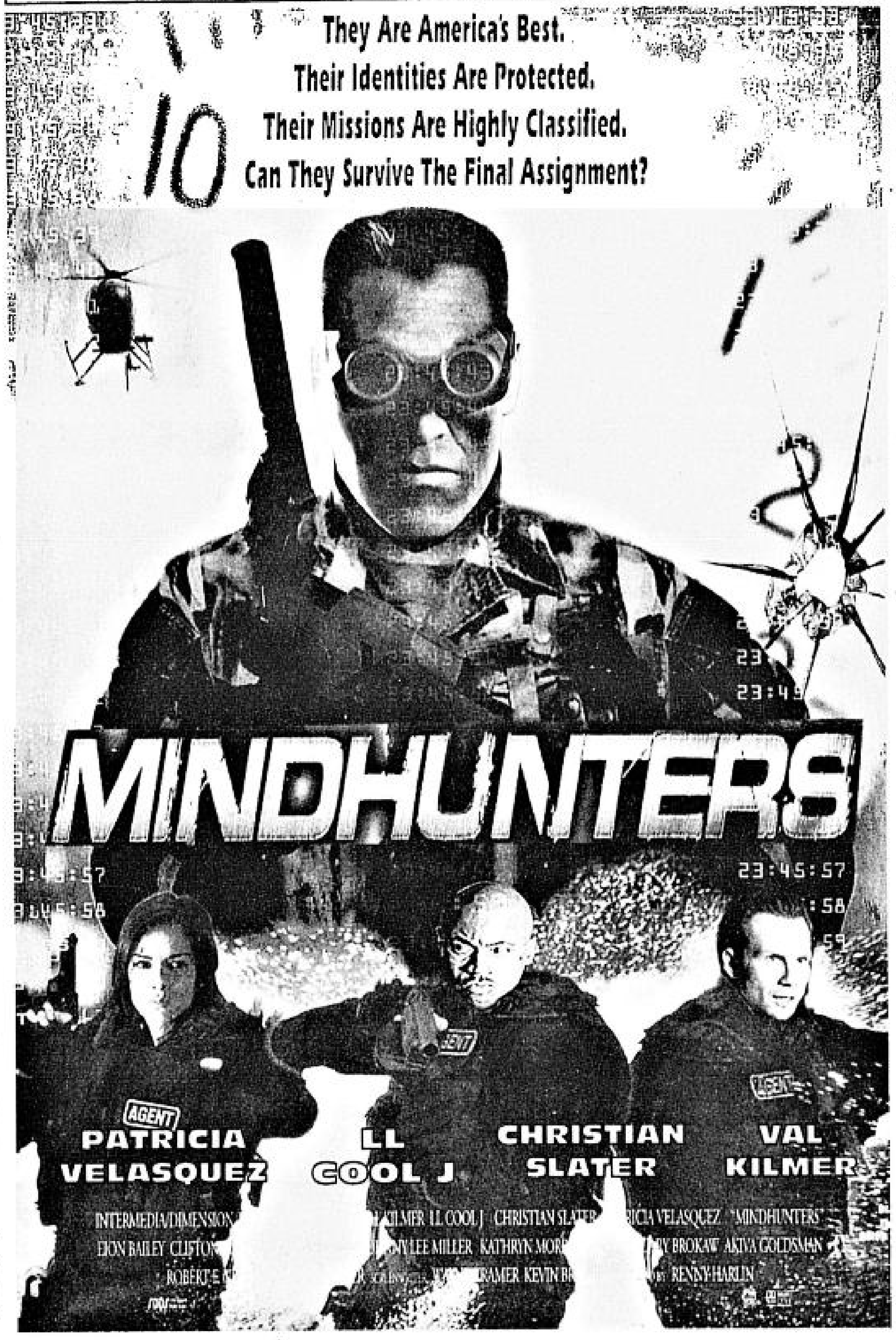
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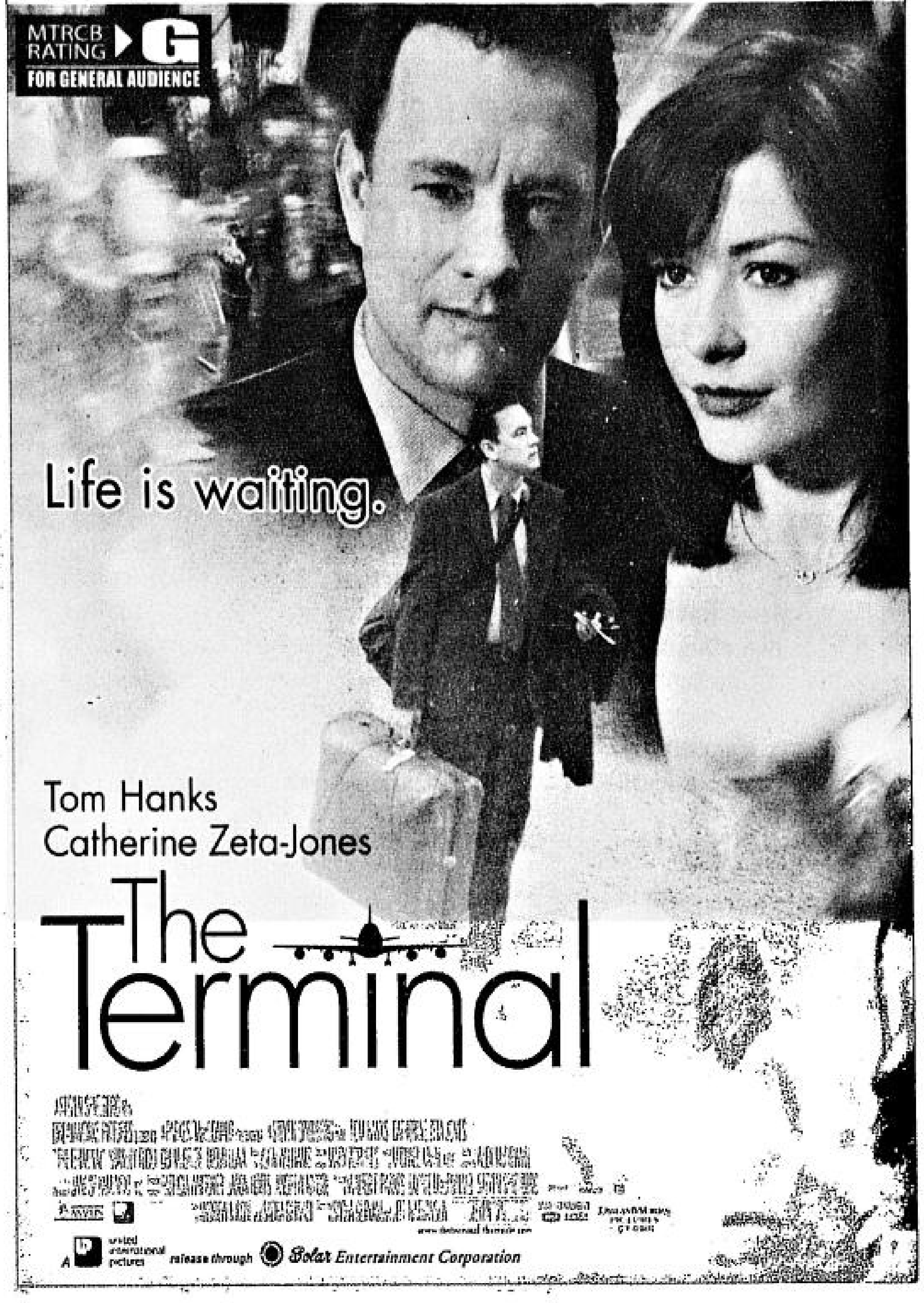
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THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

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ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CROCODILE
QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PAPATAY
CORONET A	TAG-INIT
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUD NG PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR
NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	HAMOG
B	CLOSED
C	
MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA 1,2,3&4	THE NOTEBOOK/THE TERMINAL/PRINCESS DIARIES 2/DODGEBALL
PREMIERE THEATRE	ANACONDAS
CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	NOW THAT I HAVE YOU
CINEMA-2	HAMOG
CINEMA-3	THE VILLAGE
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	ANACONDAS
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	SUGAT (RE-ISSUE)
CINEMA-6	BANGKOK HAUNTED 2
CINEMA-7	LAWS OF ATTRACTION
CINEMA-8	THUNDERBIRDS
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	ANACONDAS
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	ANACONDAS
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	PRINCESS DIARIES 2
CINEMA-12	THE NOTEBOOK
CINEMA-14	JANDARA
CINEMA-15	ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PINAS)	ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
CINEMA-1	NOW THAT I HAVE YOU
CINEMA-2	GARFIELD
CINEMA-4	VILLAGE
UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
CINEMA-4	SELDA

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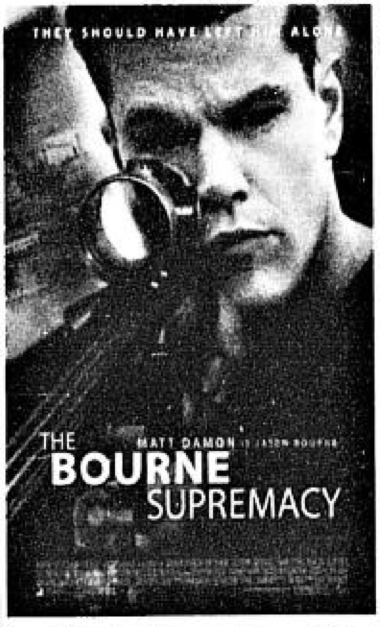
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2 DODGEBALL 10:40, 12:55, 3:10, 5:25, 7:40, 10:20 PG 13
3 THE TERMINAL 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 10:20 GP
4 ANACONDAS 11:05, 1:20, 3:35, 5:50, 8:05, 10:20 PG 13

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GOD SEND PG13 1:00,3:15,5:30,7:45,10:00	CONNIE AND CARLA PG13 1:40,3:40,5:40,7:40,9:40	TERMINAL GP 12:10,2:45,5:20,7:55,10:30

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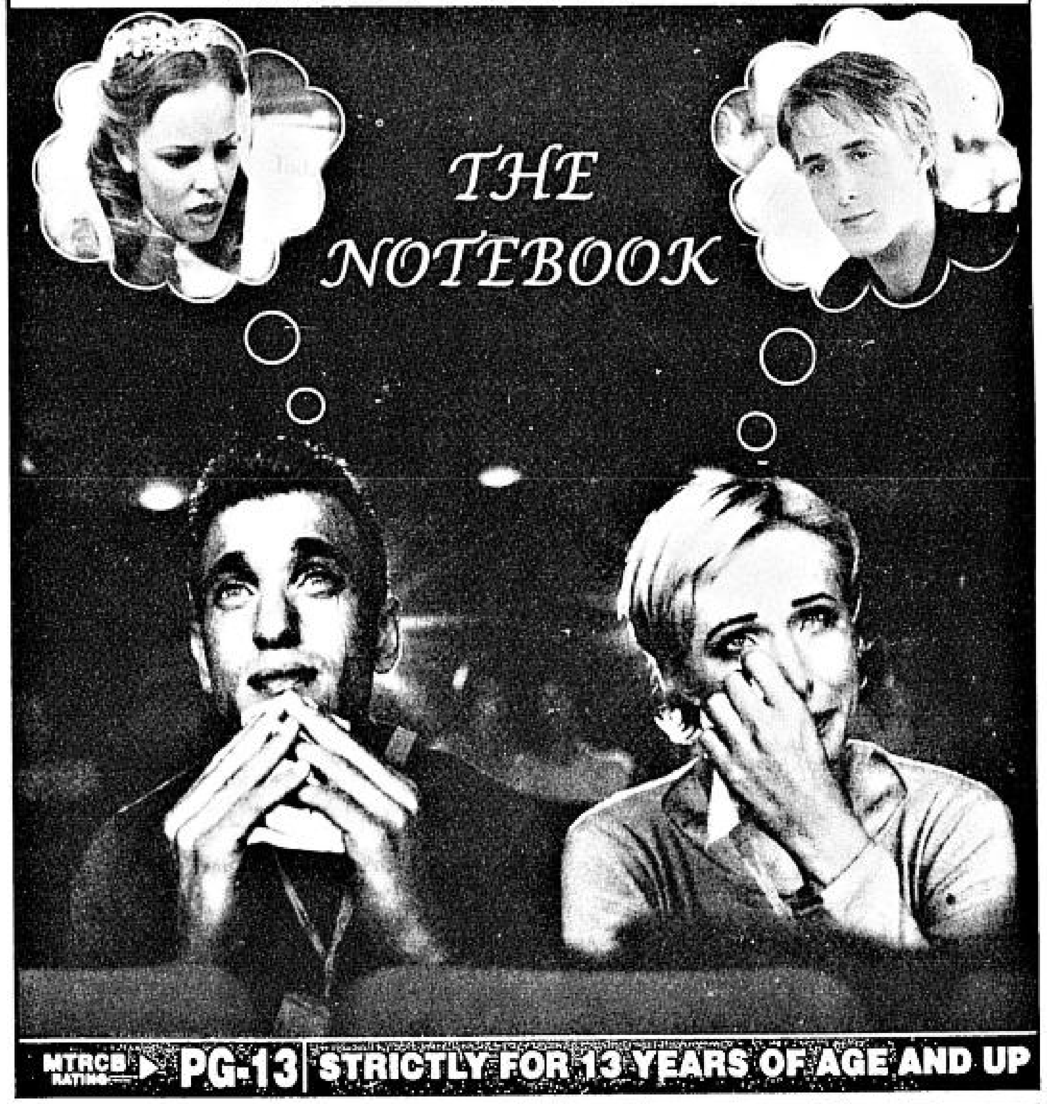
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4 GODSEND
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6 DODGEBALL
7 JANDARA
8 THE TERMINAL
9 THE PRINCESS DIARIES 2
10 HAUNTED SPIRIT 2

[redacted]

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 ANACONDAS
2 TOOL BOX MURDER
3 HAUNTED SPIRIT 2
4 THE NOTEBOOK
5 GODSEND
6 THE TERMINAL
7 DODGEBALL

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2 DODGEBALL
3 THE TERMINAL
4 GODSEND
5 ANACONDAS
6 TOOL BOX MURDER
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1 ANACONDAS
2 THE PRINCESS DIARIES 2
3 DODGEBALL
4 JANDARA
5 THE TERMINAL
6 TOOL BOX MURDER
7 ALIEN VS. PREDATOR
8 TAG-INIT

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2 THE TERMINAL
3 ANACONDAS
4 TAG-INIT

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2 DODGEBALL
3 ANACONDAS
4 TAG-INIT

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1 THE TERMINAL
2 SUPERSIZE ME
3 THE STEPFORD WIVES
4 HOUSE OF THE DEAD
5 ANACONDAS

LIPA 757-3664 / 312-5870

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4 HAMOG
5 CONNIE AND CARLA

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3 ANACONDAS
4 THUNDERBIRDS
5 TOOL BOX MURDER

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1 LAWS OF ATTRACTION
2 BANGKOK HAUNTED 2
3 THUNDERBIRDS
4 DEATH CURSE
5 CONNIE AND CARLA
6 ANACONDAS

IMUS 471-8188 / 875-5858

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2 TOOL BOX MURDER
3 THE NOTEBOOK
4 DODGEBALL
5 TAG-INIT
6 THE TERMINAL

BACOLOD 441-0458/59

1 THE PRINCESS DIARIES 2
2 A CINDERELLA STORY
3 THE PRINCE AND ME
4 THUNDERBIRDS
5 LAWS OF ATTRACTION
6 KARELASYON

ILOILO 336-8070/78

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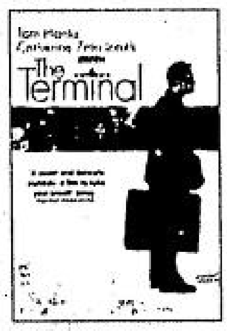
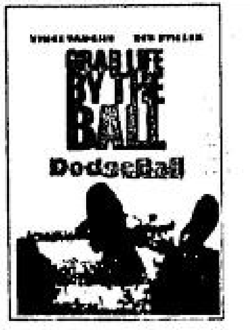
2 THE STEPFORD WIVES
3 A CINDERELLA STORY
4 SUPERSIZE ME
5 THE VILLAGE
6 KARELASYON

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2	THE TERMINAL	DODGEBALL	GODSEND	DODGEBALL 11:50, 1:50, 3:50, 5:50, 7:50, 9:50	GUARANTEED SEATS THX DODGEBALL 1:10, 3:10, 5:10, 7:10, 9:10, 11:10	CONNIE & CARLA
3	ANACONDAS	THE TERMINAL	GUARANTEED SEATS THX THE TERMINAL 12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 8:00, 10:30		GUARANTEED SEATS GODSEND 2:35, 4:45, 6:55, 9:05, 11:15	BANGKOK HAUNTED 2: THE UNBORN
4	GODSEND	GODSEND	CONNIE & CARLA		GUARANTEED SEATS ANACONDAS 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	ANACONDAS
5	THE NOTEBOOK		PRINCESS DIARIES 2		GUARANTEED SEATS THE NOTEBOOK 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00, 11:30	A CINDERELLA STORY
6			DODGEBALL			
7			THE NOTEBOOK			

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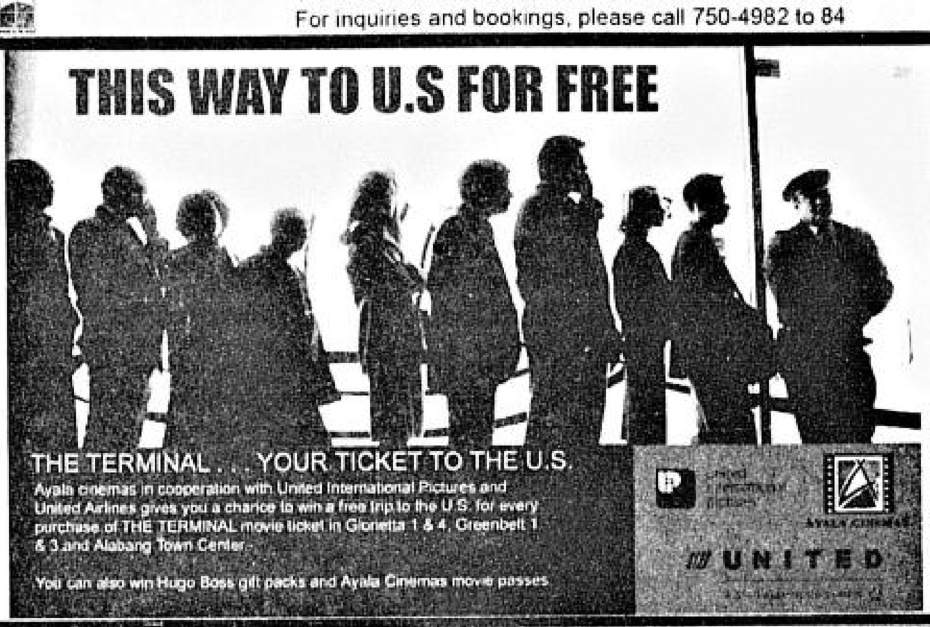
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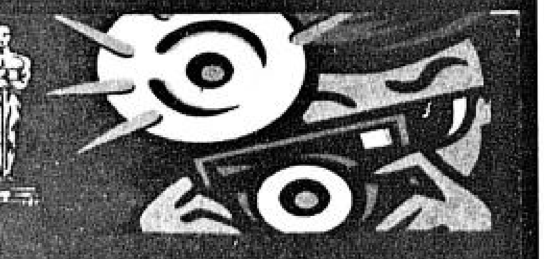

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AYALA CENTER ALABANG TOWN AYALA CENTER CEBU Lovemall!

Music from '13 Going On 30'

IF YOU miss the Decade of Decadence and its music, you'll fall in love with the soundtrack of the movie "13 Going On 30."

The album is packed with '80s superhits such as The Go-Go's "Head Over Heels," Rick Springfiled's "Jessie's Girl," Madonna's "Crazy for You," Pat Benatar's "Love is a Battlefield" and others from Whitney Houston, Belinda Carlisle and Billy Joel.

The 13-track CD also contains contemporary hits from Lillix ("What I Like About You"), Liz Phair ("Why Can't I") and newcomer Ingram Hill, with their debut single "Will I Ever Make It Home."

"13 Going On 30" the movie is a romantic comedy starring Jennifer Garner and Mark Ruffalo and will be in Metro Manila theaters on Sept. 15. The soundtrack is distributed by Sony Music Entertainment (Philippines) and is available at all record stores nationwide.

Turn-offs...

From page A24

The event, during which Mark distributed food to the kids, was sponsored by Nestlé Philippines and Jollibee.

On TV, Mark is seem regularly on "Asap Mania" and "Sarah, The Teen Princess." In the movies, he's been tapped to play the title role in "Lastikman."

Sterling Idol

DO YOU want to become the newest singing or dancing sensation? The very first Sterling Campus Idol search starts on Sept. 10 with auditions at Santa Isabel College on Taft Avenue. On Sept. 17, auditions will be conducted at San Beda College on Mendiola. The event is being supported by Sterling Notebook, Avanti Ballpen and Pentel Writing Instruments. Call 886-4407 for details.

The Sterling Campus Idol search is produced by DL Media Focus International Inc., with TV director ("Digital LG Quiz," "Daisy Siete") Pat Perez as overall creative director.

'Beauty School'

AT 9 p.m. on Sept. 19, the Discovery Channel screens "Afghan Beauty School," about the American-funded Beauty Without Borders training school that provides women in Afghanistan access to a comprehensive educational program that teaches both the art and commerce of beauty-related endeavors like salons and distributorships.

ENTERTAINMENT

E-mail: pr_entertainment@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Louie C. Camino

Text us your feedback: inquirer ent name/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Edu: I didn't point a gun at anyone

By Marinel R. Cruz

OPTICAL Media Board Chair Edu Manzano denied pointing a gun at sellers of VCDs and DVDs during a raid at the Virra Mall in Greenhills last week, refuting allegations by Virra Mall director Claire de la Fuente.

"I just want to straighten the facts," Edu said in a recent gathering with the entertainment press. "*Walang malaking gulo.* There were agitators. But it's not true that I or any of the agents who went to Virra Mall with me pointed a gun at anyone.

"Members of the Special Action Force carried guns, but they didn't point them at anyone," he said. "The men were there mainly to secure the perimeter."

Edu said the raid happened on the mall's second floor. "But some of the men went up the third floor by mistake," he added. "*Kinuyog sila doon* (They were mobbed there)."

Edu said seven persons were injured during the incident, including six agents of the OMB. One agent was hit in the head with a steel pipe, he said. The injured were treated at the nearby Cardinal Santos Memorial Medical Center on Wilson Street.

"It's illegal to sell pirated materials in malls and Claire admitted to knowing that the mall's tenants were selling them," Edu said. "Virra Mall is notorious for that. We had no choice but to do it (raid)."

Former singer De la Fuente, who is also a bus operator, is one of the directors of an association of tenants in Greenhills. She also rents out stalls.

De la Fuente was quoted in earlier interviews as saying she "pities" the tenants whose shops were "ransacked" by the OMB. She also claimed that Edu's OMB agents had pointed guns at the tenants.

But Edu insisted that De la Fuente is aware that her tenants sell pirated materials.

"Was she there during the raid?" Edu said. "She went out of the mall. She didn't look harassed."

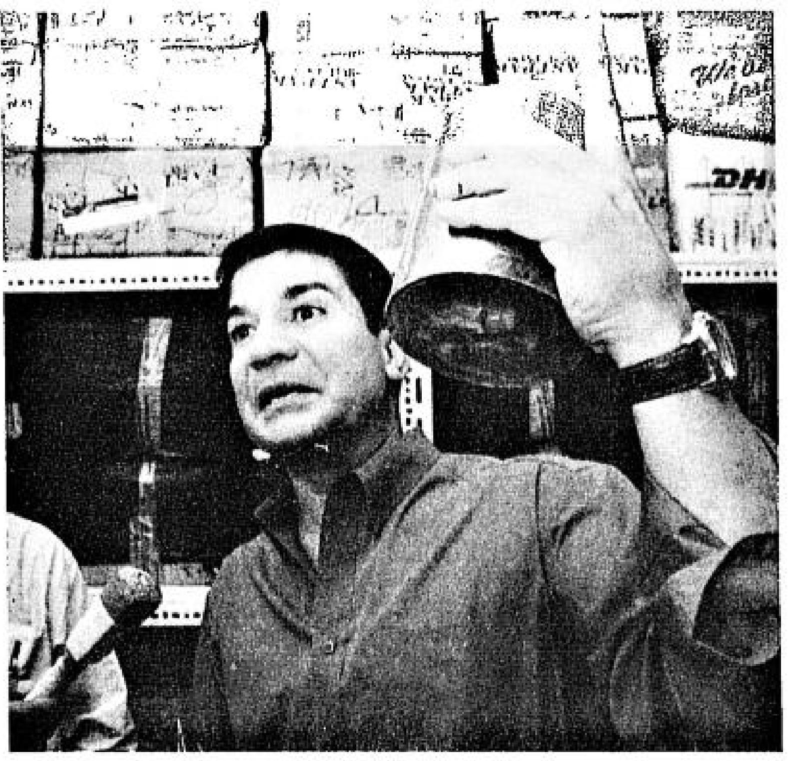
He said the OMB is offering rewards of as much as P500,000 for any information that could help the agency in its fight against piracy.

He said that despite threats, he is determined to continue the fight against the piracy of optical media, especially now that the OMB has been achieving positive results.

"Retail sales (of original video discs) are up," he claimed.

Six months since President Macapagal-Arroyo appointed him as OMB chair, the actor admitted that he's "so so tired."

"Fortunately I have able people who are always willing to assist me," he said. "They say the agents feel better when I'm around during the raids."



WHAT GUN? "There were agitators, but no gun-pointing," says Edu.

The Buboy I know is a gentleman

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

I HAVE always known **Cesar "Buboy" Montano** to be a gentleman, so I'm not inclined to believe what **Erwin Tulfo** has been blabbering about him.

I remember the time I was at Buboy's place in Bohol. He texted my beau (without my knowledge), who was with me in Bohol, to take good care of me. I was so touched when he showed me Buboy's message. That's how much of a gentleman he is.

The issue between Buboy and Erwin was triggered by ABS-CBN entertainment reporter Nina Corpuz's interview with Buboy for "TV Patrol," which is already a non-issue as far as Buboy and even Nina are concerned. The actor allegedly told Nina, "*Gusto mo buntisin din kita?*"

"I have already apologized to Nina," Buboy said. "We're okay now. Things were just blown out of proportion. When she came to interview me on the set, we were about to shoot a scene so I was surprised to see her there with a camera and a mike to interview me on the spot. Vhong Navarro, who was in the scene with me, can attest to that.

"I was in a playful mood because my adrenaline was high, so *wala siyang nakuhang matino na sagot sa akin*. I meant no malice. I just could not focus on the interview because my mind was on the shoot."

He said his answers to Nina were all in jest.

The strange thing is, Erwin has not stopped his Buboy-bashing long after matters have been ironed out between Buboy and Nina. Buboy tried to keep his cool and just ignored Erwin's lambasting. But everybody has a saturation point so you can't blame Buboy if he challenge Erwin to a fist fight.

"I just wanted to get it over with," Cesar said, "because he's been hitting me below the belt on radio and TV. Even Sunshine is stressed out, when she has just given birth to our second baby.

"I got to the gym ahead of him. I wanted just the two of us to be there, even if it meant I would have to be the one to put the boxing gloves on him. But there was a TV crew there. I didn't want it to turn into a circus.

"The president of ABS-CBN, Mr. Cito Alejandro, called and told me to go to his office. He wanted Erwin and me to settle things there. Out of respect, I went to see him. Erwin arrived at the gym after I left. He had many bodyguards and even his brothers were with him. I was all alone.

"I don't know why he keeps insisting that I have a lot of bodyguards. When we finally got to talk, all he said was he has nothing to apologize for."

If an apology is too much to give or too much to ask for, the least that Erwin can do is acknowledge his character assassination of Buboy.

MONTANO

TULFO

Nina told me that she's cool about it, so why is Erwin still making a big fuss, when he's not a part of the issue to begin with?

I've known Buboy since he was working as a utility man for Baby Pascual's production outfit many years ago. To this day, Buboy has remained humble and kind. His fellow Boholanos have nothing but superlatives for him. These are the people who really know Buboy inside out.

For feedback, e-mail friends_elpueblo@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com

Turn-offs on TV

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

LOCAL television is rife with bad role models young viewers shouldn't emulate:

- Aging macho hosts or comedians who still talk and behave like randy teenagers. They treat women like sex objects, insult contestants' looks or accented speech, crack off-color jokes, and generally disrespect everybody except themselves.
- Talents who feel so at home on TV that they behave as lazily and sloppily on the tube as they do in their own homes.

The results are very off-putting, and viewers feel that their own families' standards of acceptable behavior are being rudely challenged.

So, what's to stop them from switching off their TV sets and zapping the offending talents out of video existence? Why, nothing at all!

- Show biz celebrities turned TV hosts who use their programs to defend themselves when they get involved in controversies, or to hit their rivals in the biz.

This excessively personal and subjective use of their programs reduces their effectivity as hosts in a major way, so dissatisfied viewers can't be blamed for looking elsewhere for less irritatingly self-serving "entertainment."

- Sexy starlets who blame their going the way of all flesh on poverty, lack of education and exploitation by others, and *never* on their own laziness, desire to get rich quick, and lack of scruples.
- Guests involved in controversies who stoutly claim that they are "victims" who are merely forced by their superiors to do the deeds that have gotten them in trouble. Whatever happened to free will, and "the buck stops here"?
- Stars who are so dazzled by their alleged fame and beauty that they call too much attention to

TURN-OFFS/ A24

star group of cinemas movie guide
IN DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND

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Tag-Init
Anacondas
God Send

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Tel. No. 850.42.85
Young Virgins
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Toolbox Murder
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Anacondas
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starmall LAS PIÑAS
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ALI MALL CINEPLEX
3 Dolby ANACONDAS 12:20 pm 2:30 pm 4:40 pm 6:50 pm 9:00 pm
4 SDDS THE TERMINAL 12:25 pm 3:15 pm 6:05 pm 8:55 pm
5 dts DODGEBALL 12:00 nn 2:15 pm 4:30 pm 6:45 pm 9:00 pm
6 Dolby TOOL BOX MURDERS 12:00 nn 2:15 pm 4:30 pm 6:45 pm 9:00 pm
7 Dolby GODSEND 12:00 nn 2:15 pm 4:30 pm 6:45 pm 9:00 pm

ARANETA COLISEUM

Sep 10	NCAA : FINAL 4 - GAMES
Sep 11	ATENEO vs F E U
Sep 12	UAAP: CHEERING COMPETITION
Sep 15	JOHN MAXWELL in Manila
Sep 17	SOUTH BORDER CONCERT
Sep 18	WRR ANNIVERSARY CONCERT
Sep 19	UAAP : FINAL 4 - GAMES
Dec 25	DISNEY ON ICE : Princess Classics

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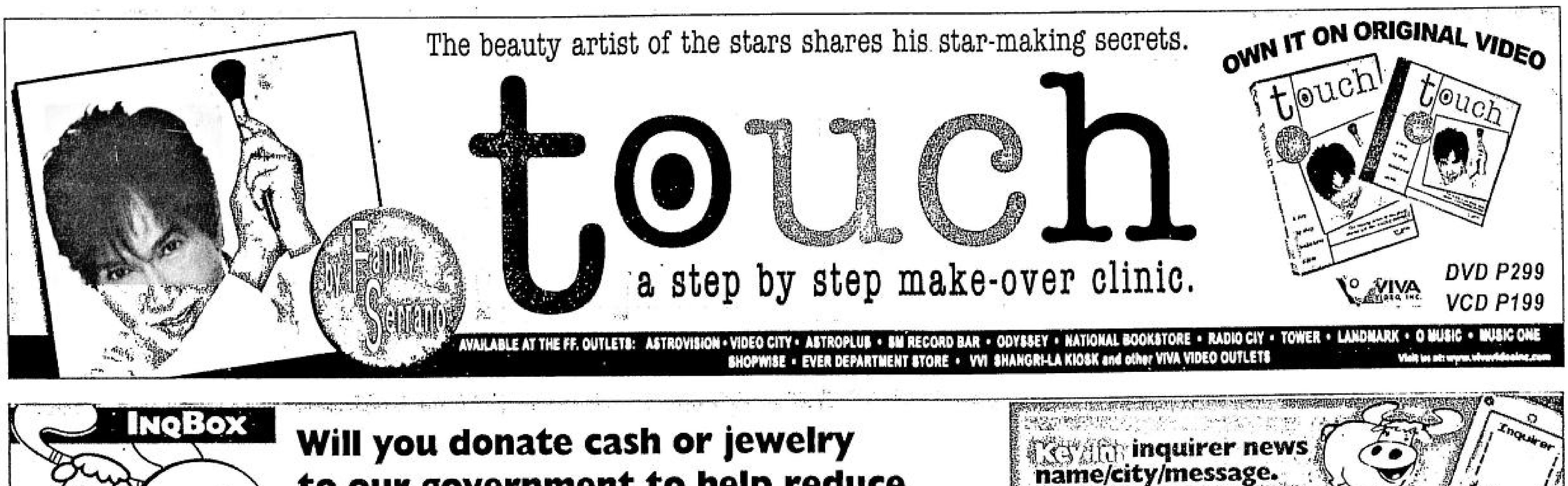
SHANG CINEPLEX
1 THE NOTEBOOK FS : 12:30PM, 3:15PM, 6:00PM, LMF: 8:55PM MTRCB Rating : (PG - 13)
2 THE TERMINAL FS : 11:00AM, 1:40PM, 4:20PM, 7:00PM LMF: 9:40PM MTRCB Rating : (GP)
3 PRINCESS DIARIES 2 FS : 11:30AM, 2.05PM, 4:40PM, 7:15PM LMF: 9:50PM MTRCB Rating : (GP)
4 DODGEBALL FS : 12:10PM, 2:25PM, 4:40PM, 6:55PM LMF: 9:10PM MTRCB Rating : (PG - 13)
PREMIERE THEATRE ANACONDAS FS: 12:50PM, 3.05PM, 5:20PM, 7:35PM, LMF: 9:50PM MTRCB Rating : (PG - 13)
For more information please call 633-2227 / 633-7851 loc. 171
Shangri-La Plaza



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Big hike in diesel prices seen next week

By Ronnel W. Domingo

CONSUMERS should brace for another round of weekly increases in pump prices of petroleum products, with the adjustment seen hitting as high as P2.14 a liter for diesel and 47 centavos for gasoline.

Raul Concepcion, chair of the private-sector Consumer and Oil Pricewatch, said the price increases could be implemented in installments that could begin this coming Monday.

"In accordance with the agreement among President Macapagal-Arroyo, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. and the COPW, the price increase will be staggered weekly and will take effect every Monday thereafter," he said.

Concepcion added that depending on the movement of prices of crude oil and finished products, the weekly increases would be calibrated.

He said that for local oil companies who import their products, gasoline prices could go up by 47 centavos a liter while diesel could go up P2.14 a liter.

But for Petron Corp. and Pilipinas Shell Corp., he said the local refiners were expected to raise diesel prices by 91 centavos a liter, but slash diesel prices by 63 centavos.

Concepcion explained that 70 percent of Petron and Shell's supplies were produced locally with Middle Eastern crude while 30 percent were imported from the regional refineries.

He appealed to Petron and Shell, who have between them 80 percent of the local petroleum market, to be sensitive to consumers' plight and not follow the price increases expected of the importers.

Concepcion said that the price of imported gasoline increased by $4.98 to $51.50 a barrel in August from $46.52 in July. Prices of imported diesel increased by $5.41 to $51.66 in August from $46.25 in July.

The price of Dubai crude increased by $3.90 to $38.55 a barrel in August from $34.65 in July (including the cost of freight, premium & insurance).

Concepcion added that he was optimistic that crude oil prices have peaked and that increases in October would be moderate.

Fernando L. Martinez, chair of the Independent Philippine Petroleum Companies Association, was in a rare mood of agreement with Concepcion.

"He is more or less correct in his estimates," Martinez said. "The only question now is when and how to implement the increases."

He said this month would be likely a repeat of the last five weeks, when pump prices increased four times.

During the period, gasoline and diesel prices jumped at a range of 30 to 50 centavos for a total of P1.45 and P1.60 a liter, respectively.

Roberto Kanapi, Shell's general manager for external affairs, said the oil companies have not fully recovered increased costs in the world market and that they wanted to have this reflected in local prices.

Body to audit gov't debts pushed

A UNIVERSITY of the Philippines-based think-tank yesterday called for creation of a body that would audit public sector debts while the party-list Anakpawis filed in Congress a resolution to probe allegations of irregularities in the books of cash-strapped National Power Corp.

The moves came in the wake of concerns over the current national fiscal crisis and rising power costs.

The Freedom from Debt Coalition urged lawmakers to pass House Joint Resolution No. 0002, which provides for the creation of a Congressional Commission on Debt.

FDC said it supported the resolution and was helping gather support from across party lines.

FDC vice president Wilson Fortaleza said in a statement that each day of delay in auditing public debts meant increased principal and interest payments that taxpayers would shoulder.

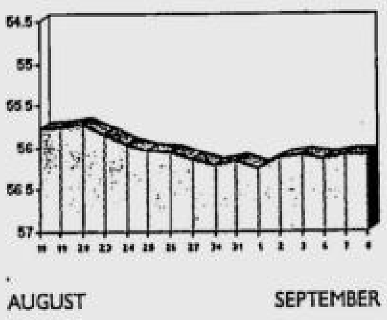
"In 2005, (Filipinos) will be paying a total of P646 billion for debt payments, both principal and interest," Fortaleza said. "This translates to P1.7B a day."

He added that if the debt problem was not addressed, the government by next year would be left with only P1,900 per person alloted for health,

BODY/B3

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 56.095 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Sept. 8, 2004

¥ 109.49 = $1

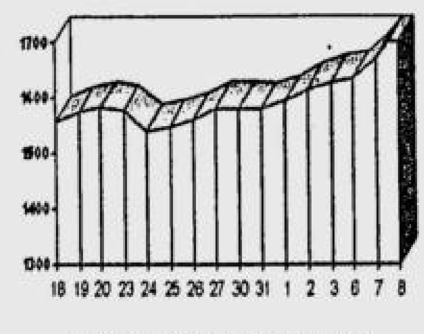
As of 5 p.m., Sept. 8, 2004

GOLD: $398.30-398.80

per ounce Hong Kong, Sept. 8, 2004

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks hit 52-month high

SHARE prices closed up 3.39 percent yesterday, hitting a 52-month high as both foreign and local investors continued coming into the market to pick up still cheap stocks, dealers said.

They said the upturn on Wall Street overnight and a renewed interest in Asian markets also helped lift sentiment, allowing the market to extend recent sharp gains.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index rose 56.69 points to 1,728.45 after trading between 1,673.25 and 1,731.53. This was the highest closing level since April 12, 2000, when it closed at 1,744.77 points.

Volume was 4.9 billion shares worth P1.9 billion after 8.38 billion shares and P1.19 billion on Tuesday.

Gainers outnumbered losers 87 to 13, with 31 stocks unchanged. AFP

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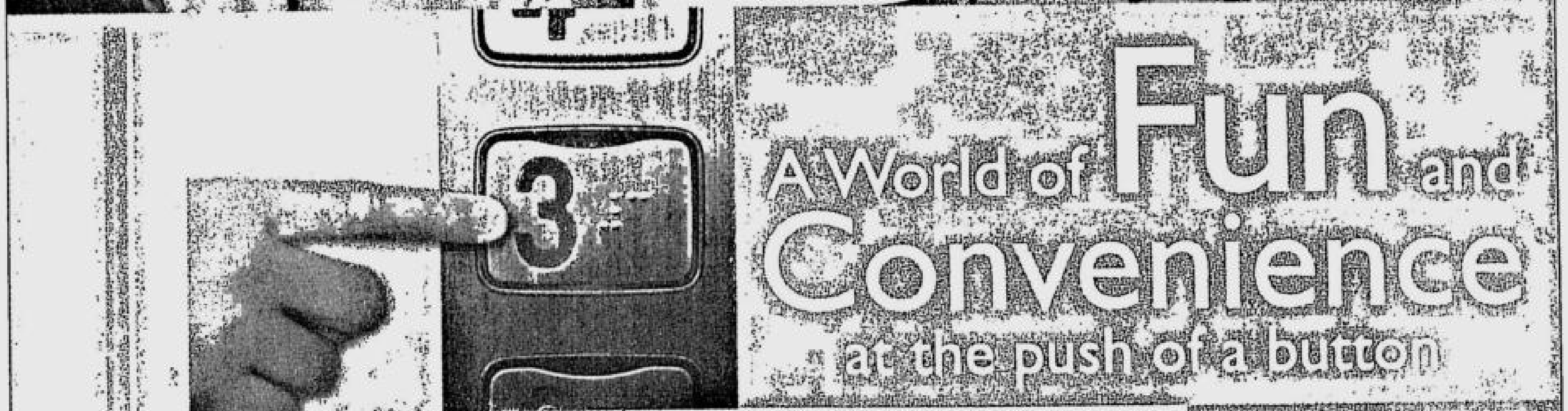

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BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

IT'S about confidence.

The government says this country is facing a fiscal crisis.

Business says the only way out of the crisis is for us to build...well, confidence.

It's really about a firm, resolute belief in our own future.

And the question in business is this: Are we actually building up in ourselves that kind of confidence? Hardly!

Sure, our political leaders tell us that we have to do something drastic. Cut the pork barrel! No more trips abroad! Turn off the aircon! Donate your dentures!

As if on cue, as media floods us with worthless talk about "austerity" and all that, our lawmakers start to make noise about keeping their pork.

So much for confidence!

* * *

FOR the body language of our political leaders, in the executive and in the legislative, delivers a different message from what they preach in media.

That is only expected of this cute administration of Gloriaetta, which has a long track record of telling us one thing, and then doing another.

But now, even the lawmakers are showing their slip, plus other parts of their underclothing.

Really, they will get their pork, fight for it, by hook or by crook.

So do you think the people, who are supposed to make the sacrifice, really believe that the government is serious about preventing the crisis? Me too!

* * *

SURVEYS show that the public is losing confidence fast. Consumer confidence last month was at its lowest for the year, according to the Business World regular survey.

Well, oil prices are not going to get any lower soon, since the uptrend is coming from actual demand.

The Opec cartel has very little to do with it.

And then this cute administration of Gloriaetta goes on record, telling us that our pay is not going to get any higher anytime soon, either.

Amid the threat of inflation (as even parking fees already doubled), and we don't expect more pay, our government is even getting ready to tax us to death.

* * *

SURE, our government officials can come up with all sorts of gimmicks.

They can even explain away trips to China as being funded by their own money. Sure, we believe them.

Malacañang is now stumbling all over the place to deflect the media flak away from Gloriaetta's recent OFFICIAL trip to China.

China, of course, is selling to this cute administration the mucho overpriced project called North Rail, costing our bankrupt government roughly P1 billion per kilometer.

And so Gloriaetta could not help but make an OFFICIAL trip to that country. Since it was an OFFICIAL trip, she had to bringing along some relatives.

That's why media sort of teased the Palace about the OFFICIAL China trip of Gloriaetta. Did she really have to bring along her clan?

Well, according to the Palace, she needed "quality time" with her family. In China?

* * *

AND that, ladies and gentlemen, was how one of the battalions of Malacañang spokespersons tried to justify Gloriaetta's OFFICIAL trip, which included her relatives in the entourage.

How did the Malacañang spokesmen put it again? Quality time?

Gloriaetta, it was explained, was working so hard, she was neglecting her family. I could almost cry, boss!

And so we were told that she needed to take a vacation with her family.

For what? So that she could spend, ahh, "quality time" with her brothers-in-law? Is that it?

Let's not even point out that it was an OFFICIAL trip, forgodsakes, and not exactly a family outing.

* * *

WHAT the public probably wanted to know was, how much did Malacañang spend for the OFFICIAL family outing? Nobody knows.

Still, according to the Malacañang spokesperson, the relatives of Gloriaetta spent their own money for the OFFICIAL China trip. It was, in short, a private affair. I see!

And so Gloriaetta must again change her tune.

Earlier, she announced a ban on foreign trips for public officials. It now turns out that she did not mean it.

According to the Palace spokesperson, foreign trips would be allowed, if the public officials would spend their own money.

The spokesperson, however, forgot to say that we, the taxpayers, actually know very well, just exactly how and where people in government get "their own" money.

* * *

SO there you have the confidence building strategy of this cute administration. It says one thing and does another. Aside from that, it also changes its tune, rather quickly.

At one time, this cute administration was supposed to have asked our beloved lawmakers to give up a little of their pork.

Yesterday, we heard a new Malacañang version. And that is, well, actually, in the final analysis, pork helps the poor.

Malacañang forgot that, while part of the pork actually goes to projects to help the poor, a good part of it goes somewhere else, to help the congressmen and the senators.

* * *

THEY say one thing and then do another. This is the recurring nightmare of the public about this cute administration.

Just the other day, Gloriaetta declared that she does not need to be popular anymore. She already won. She is still the President.

In other words, she can really become a decisive leader of this country, which has some 11 million jobless and about 40 million poor.

How people now wish they can believe her! I think, for Gloriaetta, the problem is one of credibility.

Isn't she the one who says one thing and does another?

Opec to raise price target

By Abigail L. Ho

World Energy
Congress

DR. PURNOMO Yusgiantoro, Opec president and Indonesian Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources, listens to a question during a press conference at the 19th World Energy Congress in Sydney, Australia. AP

SYDNEY, Australia—Taking note of the changing economic landscape and the effects of geopolitical issues on world oil prices, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries is exploring the possibility of raising its target range of oil prices to $22-$28 a barrel.

Purnomo Yusgiantoro, Opec president and secretary general, said in a news briefing here yesterday that increasing the target price band to reflect recent worldwide developments was one of the key items on the agenda to be taken up by the cartel in next week's meeting in Vienna.

He admitted that Opec's $22-$28 range, which the group considered "reasonable," has not been revised in four years and had not factored in new developments, like the general increase in inflation as well as the depreciation of the US dollar.

He declined to reveal the proposed target range, saying the figures were still being studied by the Opec's long-term strategy team.

A decision should be out by next week.

In recent months, the world market saw an unexpected spike in oil prices, hitting unprecedented levels of $50 a barrel.

The benchmark Dubai crude, which Philippine oil refiners used in pricing their petroleum products, zoomed past the $41-a-barrel mark, beating record highs set during the Gulf War in the early '90s, the United States-led war on Iraq and past Opec output cuts.

Yusgiantoro, as with energy officials the world over, noted the effect of geopolitical issues on world oil prices.

Geopolitical or "non-fundamental" issues, which go beyond the basic supply-and-demand balance, had driven prices up these past months by between $10-$15 a barrel, he said.

"What we're saying is that if the political premium of between $10 and $15 per barrel did not exist in the market, if we remove the non-fundamentals, then we hope that prices will be going down to a level of $30 a barrel," he added.

END OF REHAB PROGRAM

Nenaco expects earnings of ₱8.1B

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez and Clarissa S. Batino

DEBT-RIDDEN shipping firm Negros Navigation Co. expects to earn a total of P8.1 billion at the end of its proposed 10-year rehabilitation plan.

Nenaco rehabilitation receiver Monico V. Jacob reported to the Manila Regional Trial Court that of the projected amount, Nenaco would set aside P4.3 billion to settle its debts.

As of March this year, Nenaco had P2.5 billion worth of liabilities, of which P948 million were in unsecured or "clean" loans and P857.9 million were secured or backed by collateral.

The success of Nenaco's rehabilitation program was based on the assumption that all of Nenaco's shipping vessels would be in full operation and properly maintained, making it a force to reckon with in the domestic shipping industry.

Nenaco was also counting on the infusion of new cash to keep the vessels in good running condition; a yearly minimum increase of 2.5 percent in passage ticket price, a 5-percent hike in freight rates; annual increase of at least 5 percent in passage volume and a maximum increase of 5 percent in operating and administrative expenses.

Nenaco has a pending petition with the Manila RTC for suspension of debt payments and a 10-year restructuring of P2.4 billion in outstanding debt.

Nenaco would not be able to solely count on its parent firm for help in resuscitating operations as Metro Pacific Corp. said it would prioritize its property and infrastructure projects over its shipping subsidiary.

Metro Pacific said that "while it may assist in facilitating further financing needed to advance the rehabilitation program, at this time it has not committed any further monies other than what has already been lent."

"Metro Pacific's primary focus is to ensure the success of its property and burgeoning infrastructure investments," the company in its disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of September 8, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	17	17.5	17	17.5	294,300
Bank of the Phil. Islands	42.5	45	42.5	44.5	3,806,100
China Banking Corp.	520	530	520	530	3,370
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	41.5	42	41.5	42	45,600
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.49	0.5	330,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	26	28	26	27.5	809,000
Philippine National Bank	22.5	22.5	22.5	22.5	1,100
Phil. Savings Bank	27.5	27.5	27.5	27.5	10,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.25	12.25	12.25	12.25	7,000
Security Bank Corp.	21	21.75	21	21.25	109,300
Union Bank of the Phil.	24.5	24.5	24.5	24.5	8,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	100,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2300	2310	2300	2310	340
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	250,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	110	110	110	110	3,500
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1540	1555	1540	1555	3,260
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	21	21.5	21	21.5	24,100
Digital Telecom Phils. Inc.	0.68	0.71	0.67	0.69	6,830,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	940	1005	940	995	137,450
Ipeople Inc.	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52	55,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.045	0.046	0.045	0.045	2,800,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.038	0.039	0.036	0.039	11,600,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.21	0.22	0.21	0.22	300,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	2.9	2.9	2.75	2.8	23,521,000
Phil. Telegraph & Tel. Co.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	10,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1360	1390	1360	1375	109,940
Ivantage Corp.	0.68	0.69	0.67	0.67	4,570,000
Philweb Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	93,300,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	15.5	16	15.5	15.75	194,900
Manila Electric Co. B	23.5	24.75	23.25	24.75	1,893,500
Petron Corp.	2.75	2.95	2.75	2.95	12,389,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	70,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.34	1.4	1.34	1.4	799,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	4,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	4.5	4.7	4.5	4.65	4,648,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc..	0.4	0.41	0.39	0.4	2,910,000
Republic Cement Corp.	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	200,000
Union Cement Corp.	2.1	2.34	2.1	2.26	15,380,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	29	30	29	30	53,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	25.5	26.5	25.5	26	442,300
RFM Corp.	0.76	0.77	0.76	0.77	90,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.36	0.36	0.36	0.36	70,000
San Miguel Corp. A	58.5	59	58.5	59	31,400
San Miguel Corp. B	70.5	70.5	70	70.5	158,800
Vitarich Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.3	680,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.005	5,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	0.0055	55,000,000
Ayala Corp.	6.2	6.3	6.2	6.3	18,412,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	60,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	3.4	3.55	3.4	3.5	801,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11.25	11.25	11.25	11.25	500
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.026	0.027	0.026	0.027	1,800,000
A. Soriano Corp.	1.46	1.58	1.46	1.52	3,025,000
APC Group Inc.	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	500,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0075	0.0065	0.007	314,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.58	1.58	1.58	1.58	20,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	24.75	24.75	24.5	24.5	1,525,900
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.13	100,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.55	0.62	0.55	0.62	73,270,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.135	0.135	670,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.28	0.31	0.28	0.3	16,380,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.16	0.165	0.155	0.155	6,150,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	2.32	2.34	2.16	2.18	9,955,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.034	0.034	0.034	0.034	3,400,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.91	40,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	6,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	27.5	28.5	27	28.5	1,104,100
Global Equities Inc.	0.075	0.08	0.0725	0.08	56,200,000
Ionics Inc.	1.94	1.94	1.84	1.84	337,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	1.76	1.78	1.76	1.78	230,000
Macroasia Corp.	1.42	1.42	1.34	1.34	90,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.014	0.014	0.014	0.014	4,600,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.24	1.28	1.24	1.28	9,102,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.12	0.16	0.12	0.16	630,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.56	0.63	0.56	0.59	215,670,000
Prime Orion Phils Inc.	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.15	8,370,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.1	1.12	1.1	1.12	20,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.18	0.19	0.17	0.17	1,850,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.85	0.85	0.82	0.82	240,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	130,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.155	0.155	0.15	0.15	2,380,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.2	0.2	1,470,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	400,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.84	1.84	1.78	1.78	131,000
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	1.02	1.08	0.95	1.02	2,537,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.075	0.075	0.0725	0.0725	5,500,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.75	0.79	0.75	0.77	21,190,000
Acesite Phils Hotel Corp.	9.5	10	9.5	10	4,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.35	0.37	0.35	0.37	1,840,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.55	0.55	0.55	0.55	340,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.31	0.32	0.31	0.32	250,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp (Pdr)	20.5	21.75	20.5	21.75	204,500
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	400
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	2,800
PLDT (10% Pref) Series W	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,600
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,700
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Z	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,600
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	1,700
PLDT 10% Pref Series Cc	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	4,100
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	15,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	6	6.3	6	6.2	31,334,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	0.47	0.48	0.47	0.48	1,140,000
C&P Homes Inc.	0.29	0.31	0.29	0.31	24,550,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	380,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.3	0.35	0.3	0.34	96,240,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	80,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.02	1.06	1.02	1.06	19,628,000
Gotesco Land, Inc.	0.095	0.095	0.09	0.095	1,500,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	200,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.18	0.19	0.18	0.185	2,600,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.46	0.47	0.45	0.45	300,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	400,000
SM Development Corp.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	20,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6	6.4	6	6.4	39,620,000
MINING					
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.006	0.0065	0.006	0.0065	254,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	3	3.1	3	3.1	16,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.215	0.215	0.21	0.21	2,560,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	630,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.015	0.016	0.015	0.016	363,400,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.017	0.018	0.017	0.018	275,700,000
Omico Corp.	0.007	0.007	0.006	0.0065	2,313,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	50,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	17,000,000
Interport Res.	0.0042	0.005	0.0042	0.0046	159,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0042	0.005	0.0042	0.0046	70,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	0.0044	153,000,000
Pacifica	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	34,500,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	2.85	2.85	2.8	2.85	113,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.034	0.036	0.034	0.034	3,400,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	600,000

CURRENCIES

September 8, 2004 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.826037	1.000000	56.1190
Japan	Yen	0.007558	0.009150	0.5135
United Kingdom	Pound	1.464893	1.773400	99.5214
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.105914	0.128220	7.1956
Switzerland	Franc	0.651654	0.788892	44.2718
Canada	Dollar	0.641582	0.776699	43.5876
Singapore	Dollar	0.486390	0.588824	33.0442
Australia	Dollar	0.573677	0.694493	38.9743
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.191195	2.652661	148.8647
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.220277	0.266667	14.9651
Brunei	Dollar	0.484963	0.587096	32.9472
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000089	0.000108	0.0061
Thailand	Baht	0.019842	0.024021	1.3480
UAE	Dirham	0.224907	0.272272	15.2796
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.210600	67.9377
Argentina	Peso	0.276036	0.334169	18.7532
Brazil	Real	0.284057	0.343879	19.2981
Denmark	Kroner	0.134481	0.162803	9.1363
India	Rupee	0.017856	0.021617	1.2131
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.217407	0.263193	14.7701
Mexico	New Peso	0.071280	0.086292	4.8426
New Zealand	Dollar	0.534929	0.647585	36.3418
Norway	Kroner	0.119863	0.145106	8.1432
Pakistan	Rupee	0.014046	0.017004	0.9542
South Africa	Rand	0.125060	0.151398	8.4963
Korea	Won	0.000718	0.000869	0.0488
Sweden	Kroner	0.109803	0.132927	7.4597
Syria	Pound	0.016027	0.019402	1.0888
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024360	0.029490	1.6549
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000431	0.000522	0.0293

DISCLOSURES

FAIRMONT Holdings Inc. transferred to the 6/F of World Trade Center Building, Makati City.

* * *

DIGITAL Telecommunications Philippines Inc. said that proceeds from its issuance of preferred shares will be used to finance the company's purchase of GSM equipment for the installation and commissioning of cell sites.

* * *

THE LISTING of additional 1,150 **Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.** commons shares yesterday (Wednesday) brought total shares under the company's executive stock option plan to 209,164.

* * *

PETROENERGY Resources Corp. disclosed the purchase by its director, Helen Dee, of 32,000 shares of the company under HYDEE Management last Sept. 6.

Compiled by Maricar D. Tolosa, PDI Research

Body to audit . . .

From page B1

education and social services.

Fortaleza further urged Congress to prioritize the audit of the debt service for the Bataan nuclear power plant and of Napocor's "onerous" contracts with independent power producers.

Built in 1984 during the administration of Ferdinand Marcos, the Bataan plant was estimated to cost more than $2 billion. The government continues to pay $155,000 a day to pay for debts used to build the plant.

Data from FDC show that Napocor's contracts with IPPs pushed the firm's debts from P122 billion in 1994 to P1.4 trillion in 2003. The firm's debts make up almost a fifth of consolidated public sector debts of P5.4 trillion.

Also yesterday, Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran filed a resolution for the House committee on energy to investigate the reported anomalies that the Commission on Audit found when it examined Napocor's books.

Based on the COA report, Napocor appeared to have about P19.48 billion in unverified accounts, it said.

Ronnel W. Domingo

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500,000 - 999,999	6.00	6.25	7.25
1.0MM - 4,999,999	6.75	7.00	7.50
5.0MM - 9,999,999	6.75	7.00	7.50
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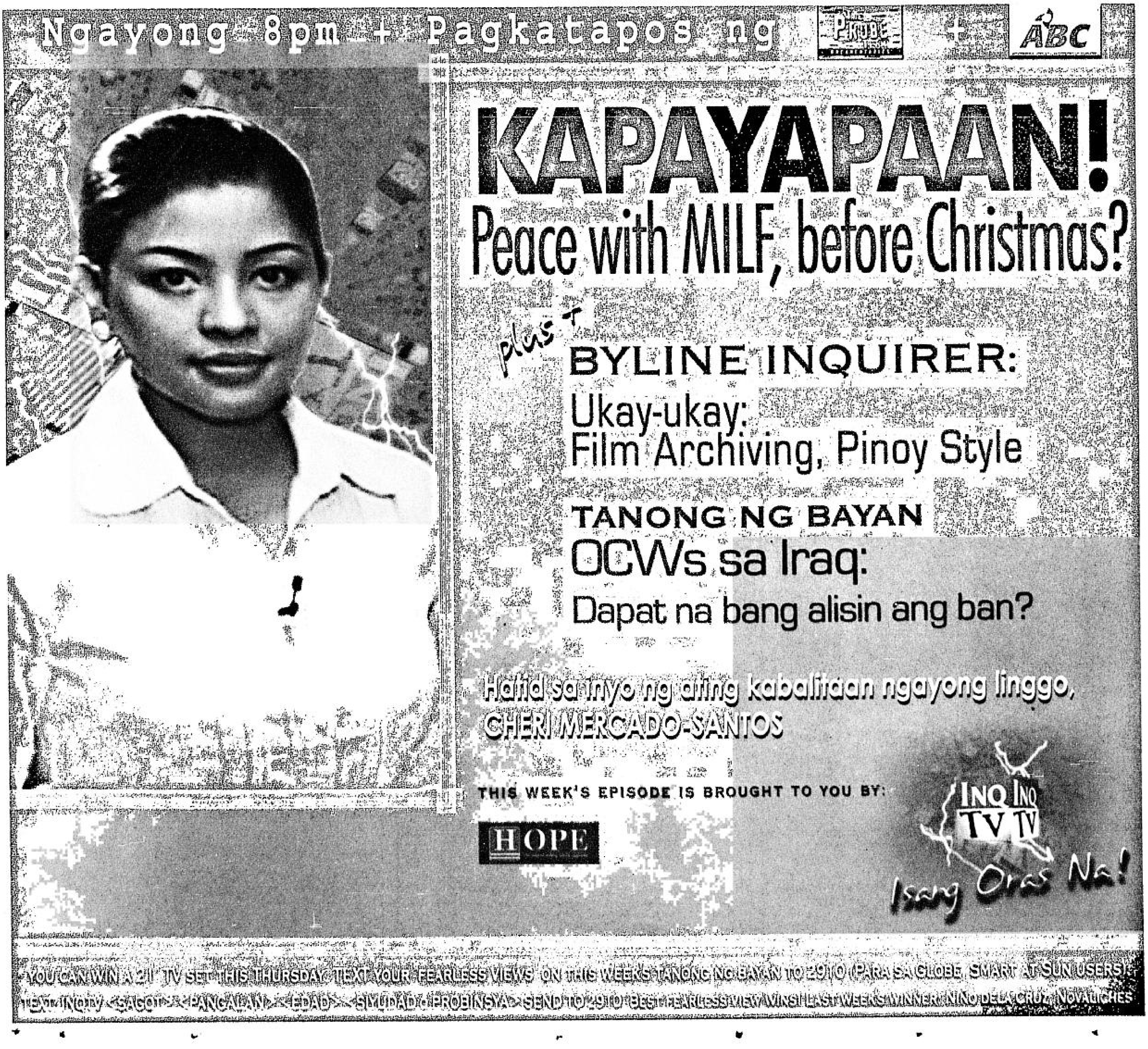

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NOTICE OF LOSS

Lost alien certificate of registration issued to Dayaldas Pribhdas by Bureau of Immigration on July 9, 1996 MNL(PDI-July 7-11, 2004)

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NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE OF SCRAP / JUNK ITEMS

"AS IS, WHERE IS" BASIS

DATE OF BIDDING : Sept. 29, 2004, 2:00 PM, Solarium Multi-Purpose Hall, Building-1 Ground Floor NPC-Head Office, Agham Road corner Quezon Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City.

The National Power Corporation will conduct public bidding of the following items:

SCHEDULE I

	Item Description and Location	Minimum Bid Price
1.	One (1) lot of unserviceable plant parts, returned equipment and used/ junk items such as: copper-tubes, radiator elements, telephone wires, electric cables, automotive parts, and spares junk vehicles, office equipment, laboratory equipment, scrap metals, batteries, service transformer, as shown in the pictures. Located at Pantabangan HEP, Nueva Ecija Province.	P 401,803.00/lot
2.	One (1) lot of unserviceable and scrap metals, consisting of assorted scrap iron and copper wires and cables. Located at NPC-MEC, Brgy. Bul and at Sucat TPP, Muntinlupa City.	P 1,092,960.00/lot
3	One (1) lot of unserviceable items, junk equipment and scrap iron and copper wires. Located at NPC-SPUG Compound in Brgy. Minuyan, San Jose Del Monte City (Bulacan)..	P 233,950.00/lot

SCHEDULE – II

	Two-Year Contract of Sale:	Minimum Bid Price
1.	Old Records / Used papers at NPC HO (Bond Deposit Required. P 3,500 00)	P 5.00 / kg.
2.	Old Newspapers / cartons at NPC HO (Bond Deposit Required . P 2,000 00)	P 1.50 / kg.
3.	Used Continuous Forms at NPC HO (Bond Deposit Required . P1,000 00)	P 9.27 / kg.

ALL BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1. PROPOSAL BOND DEPOSIT IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S/CASHIER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL BID PRICE.
2. LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN 2003 ORIGINAL (OR CERTIFIED XEROX COPY) FOR THE BIDDER OR AN AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT (ORIGINAL) OF THE COMPANY.

All interested parties who wish to secure bid forms for this public bidding must present a valid Tax Identification Card or Income Tax Return (Original must be presented).

Interested parties who wish to participate in the public bidding may secure the bid form at P500.00/set from S.V. Lomuntad, Jr. at Bldg. 1, Ground Floor, NPC Head Office. Corner Agham Road and Quezon Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City or call telephone no. 924-5384. Deadline for issuance of the bid forms is until 4:30 PM September 28, 2004.

For the Materials Management Department
(Sgd.) FELIX B. TACATA, JR.
OIC, MMD

(PDI – September 8, 9 & 10, 2004)

PORO POINT MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
A Subsidiary of Bases Conversion Development Authority

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROAD NETWORK OF THE PORO POINT COMMERCIAL COMPLEX (PPCC)

The Poro Point Management Corporation (PPMC) invites interested contractors, with a Large B License (General Engineering GE-1 Road, Highway pavement, Railways, Airport horizontal structures and Bridges) as accredited by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB), to submit Application for Eligibility, and subsequently to bid, if eligible, for the Construction of the Road Network of the PPCC, Poro Point Special Economic and Freeport Zone, Poro, San Fernando City, La Union.

The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) of P 65,600,000.00 shall come from PPMC corporate funds.

Eligibility forms shall be made available to interested contractors on the dates and place mentioned below upon payment of a non-refundable amount of five thousand pesos (P5,000.00).

Schedule of Procurement Activities

Activity	Dates	Time	Place
Issuance of Eligibility Statement Form	September 23, 2004 to September 24, 2004	8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	PPMC Office, Pennsylvania Ave., San Fernando City, La Union
Deadline for Submission of Letter of Intent and Eligibility Statement Form	September 30, 2004	2:00 p.m.	Pre-Departure Area, Terminal Building, San Fernando Airport, Canaoay, San Fernando City, La Union
Issuance of Instructions to Bidders and other Bid Documents	October 22, 2004	8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	PPMC Office, Pennsylvania Ave., San Fernando City, La Union
Pre-Bid Conference and Site Inspection	November 10, 2004	2:00 p.m.	Pre-Departure Area, Terminal Building, San Fernando Airport, Canaoay, San Fernando City, La Union
Submission and Opening of Bids	November 22, 2004	9:00 a.m.	Pre-Departure Area, Terminal Building, San Fernando Airport, Canaoay, San Fernando City, La Union

Application for Eligibility shall be evaluated using "PASS/FAIL" criteria. Thus, only eligible firms shall be invited to participate in the bidding. All Bids shall be evaluated in accordance with R.A. 9184 and its IRR-A.

Should you need any further information or clarification regarding the Project, you may contact Engr. Jose B. Karganilla at Telephone No. (072) 888-59-54.

(Sgd.) ANTHONY C. MANGUIAT
Chairman, BAC

(PDI – September 9 & 16, 2004)

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SALE CLOSING DATE: WEDNESDAY 22ND SEPTEMBER 2004 - 6PM
VIEWING: STRICTLY BY APPOINTMENT

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Tel: 852 2910/11 E-mail: manila@henrybutcher.com

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Republic of the Philippines
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Office of the Ombudsman is inviting all interested and legitimate contractors to apply for eligibility and submit bid proposals for **JANITORIAL AND OTHER SERVICES FOR 2004-2005** with an approved budget of Fourteen Million Six Hundred Ninety Eight Thousand Five Hundred Ten & 80/100 Pesos **(P14,698,510.80)**. The source of fund for this expense shall be taken from the Office General Fund.

All interested parties are invited to send their eligibility requirements/documents and procure the Bidding Documents from the Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), Office of the Ombudsman Bldg., Agham Road, North Triangle, Quezon City c/o Mr. Remo S. Feliza, BAC Secretary, Tel. Nos. 926-9032 local 221, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00)

Listed hereunder are the required eligibility requirements/documents (whichever are applicable for single proprietorship or corporation) to be submitted in a certified true copy by the issuing agency:

I. CLASS "A" DOCUMENTS
  A. LEGAL
    1. SEC/ DTI Registration;
    2. Articles of Incorporation;
    3. Valid & Current Mayor's Permit/Municipal License;
    4. VAT Registration and TIN of Taxpayer;
    5. Income Tax Return for the Preceding Calendar Year;
    6. Sworn Statement of Prospective Bidder that it is not "blacklisted"/barred from bidding by the government/any of its agencies, offices, corporation/ local government units;
    7. List of Clients;
    8. Company Profile;
    9. Authority of company representative;
    10. SSS Clearance / Certification latest quarter (for updated premium payments);
    11. DOLE or NLRC Clearance / Certification latest quarter (for no pending complaint against them);
    12. Philhealth Clearance / Certification latest quarter (for updated premium payments)
  B. TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS
    Statement of the prospective bidder of all its ongoing and completed government and private contracts within the period specified in the Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid including the contracts awarded but not yet started. Statement should include:
      a) Name and location of the Contract/s;
      b) Date of Contract/s;
      c) Kinds of Services offered;
      d) Amount of Contract and Value of Outstanding Contracts;
      e) Date of Delivery of Sevices;
      f) End-user's acceptance if completed;
  C. FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS
    1. The prospective bidder's latest audited financial statements, stamped "received" by the BIR or its duly accredited and authorized institutions, for the immediately preceding calendar year, showing, among others, the prospective bidder's total and current assets and liabilities;
    2. The prospective bidder's computation for its Net Financial Contracting Capacity (NFCC) which shall be in accordance with section 23 11 of the IRR-A; or a commitment from a licensed bank to extend to it a credit line if awarded the contract to be bid, or a cash deposit certificate, in an amount not lower than that set by the procuring entity in the Bidding Documents, which shall be at least equal to ten percent (10%) of the approved budget for the contract to be bid.

II. CLASS "B" DOCUMENTS
    1. Valid joint venture agreement, in case of a joint venture; and
    2. Letter authorizing the BAC or its duly authorized representative/s to verify any or all of the documents submitted for the eligibility check

BAC shall use a "pass/fail" criteria to determine the eligibility of prospective bidders As such, non-submission of the requested eligibility requirements will result in the disqualification of prospective bidders.

SCHEDULE OF BIDDING ACTIVITIES

1. Schedule of Publication	- 09 September & 16 September 2004
2. Pre-bid Conference	- 21 September 2004 @ 9.00 AM BAC Secretariat, GSD Office of the Ombudsman Building, Q.C.
3. Issuance of Bid and Eligibility Documents	- 21 September 2004 BAC Secretariat, GSD Office of the Ombudsman Building, Q.C.
4. Deadline of submission of Eligibility Docs. & Bids	- 12 October 2004 @ 9.00 AM - BAC Secretariat, GSD Office of the Ombudsman Building, Q.C.
5. Opening of Bids	- 12 October 2004 @ 9.30 AM BAC Secretariat, GSD Office of the Ombudsman Building, Q.C

The Office of the Ombudsman reserves the right to reject any and all bids, to waive any defect or informality, and assumes no obligation whatsoever to compensate indemnity to the bidders for any expenses that they may incur in the preparation of bids and to accept the offer most advantageous to the government.

(Sgd) ERNESTO M. NOCOS
Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI-Sept 9. 2004)

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UNDP

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Contracting of a Manufacturer / Supplier to Supply and Installation of the 20 kWp Photovoltaic (PV) – 20 kW Diesel Generator (DG) Hybrid Power System, Including Instrumentation controls and necessary protection in Barangay New Ibajay, El Nido, Palawan
under the Project "Renewable Energy-Based Village Power System (Project ID 00033498)

The Development Support Services Center (DSSC) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) would like to invite local and international manufacturers and/or suppliers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply and installation of the 20 kWp Photovoltaic (PV)-20 kW Diesel Generator (DG) Hybrid Power System, including instrumentation controls and necessary protection in Barangay New Ibajay, El Nido, Palawan under the project "Renewable Energy-Based Village Power System (Project ID 00033498)".

The project aims to demonstrate the viability of a small-scale renewable energy service company (RESCO) as a delivery mechanism to off-grid area and operated on a "fee for service basis", and the abovementioned procurement is one of the component activity under the project.

Bidding Documents (Requirements for Eligibility, Instructions to Bidders, Terms of Reference and Standard Conditions of Contract) may be secured personally, upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **Philippine Pesos Three Thousand (PhP 3,000.00)**, from the following address:

Development Support Services Center
United Nations Development Programme
7th Floor NEDA sa Makati Building
106 Amorsolo Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City (via courier)
Tel. No. (632) 892 06 11 loc. 275
Fax No. (632) 816 40 61 / 893 2610

International suppliers are encouraged to appoint and authorize Philippine-based counterparts to secure the bidding documents and submit proposals for and in their behalf.

The abovementioned Bidding Documents will be released to all interested parties strictly from **September 9 to September 22, 2004 only.** The Bidding Documents shall contain all instructions on the rules, procedures, bid opening dates, other schedules and requirements.

All prospective bidders are required to conduct **ocular site inspection** on **September 23-25, 2004.** A Certificate of Site Inspection from the Barangay Chairman, duly noted by DOE and UNDP, shall be issued thereafter. A **pre-bid conference** shall be conducted on **September 27, 2004, 2:00 PM at the UNDP Office.** All terms, conditions, specifications and related matters will be discussed during the pre-bid conference.

UNDP reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any defect or informality therein, accept the bid and award the contract to the most advantageous offer to the UNDP based on UNDP criteria. UNDP assumes no obligation or responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidder for any expense or loss that may be incurred for the preparation of bids, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made for this Contract.

(Sgd) **ETHELIND B. CAPUNO**
Manager, DSSC

(PDI--Sept. 8 & 9, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Education
DepED Complex, Meralco Ave., Pasig City

Invitation for Bids

ICB No.: SEMP2TEEP-1-2004-TX
Invitation for Bids No.: 1-2004-TX

1. The Republic of the Philippines has received a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), toward the cost of the Second Social Expenditure Management Project (SEMP2) and Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP), and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this loan to eligible payments under the contract for Procurement of Printing only and Delivery of Textbooks in Mathematics.
2. The Department of Education (DepED) now invites sealed bids from eligible Bidders for the printing only from camera-ready-copy and delivery of the following **Textbooks** to Public Elementary School Districts and High Schools under SEMP2 and TEEP Provinces:

Item No.	Subject & Level	Quantity in Copies	No. of Pages	Category
	Elementary:			
1	Mathematics 1	8,254	440	Lesson Guides
	Mathematics 2	8,170	432	Lesson Guides
	Mathematics 3	7,354	592	Lesson Guides
	Mathematics 4	7,029	424	Lesson Guides
	Mathematics 5	6,037	432	Lesson Guides
	Mathematics 6	5,893	512	Lesson Guides
2	Mathematics 3	321,020	256	Textbooks
	High School:			
3	Mathematics IV	902,608	336	Textbooks
	Total	1,266,365		

Estimated Printing and Delivery Completion Period: 150 days. Indicative Printing and Delivery Dates: March to July, 2005.

3. A margin of preference shall be granted to Textbooks manufactured in Purchaser's country for purposes of bid price comparison only.
4. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from DepED and inspect the Bidding Documents at BAC Secretariat, Room 112-A, Mabini Building, DepED Complex, Pasig City, Philippines, Tel. Nos. (632) 6339343 / 6366542 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. starting **September 22, 2004.** Information is also available at **http://www.deped.gov.ph** or **www.procurementservice.org.**
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents in English may be purchased by interested eligible Bidders upon submission of a written application to the address given below and payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of Php3,000.00 or US$55.00. The method of payment will be cash, cashier's check, manager's check or certified check. The Bidding Documents will be sent by mail. No liability will be accepted for loss or late delivery.
6. A pre-bid conference shall be conducted on **October 8, 2004 at 2:00 p.m** at the Bulwagan ng Karunungan, Rizal I Building, DepED Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City, Philippines.
7. Bids must be delivered to the address indicated in par. 6, at or before 10:00 a.m. on **October 26, 2004.** A bid security shall be required equivalent to not less than 2.5% of the bid price, in Philippine peso or in any freely convertible currency of eligible countries. Late bids shall be rejected. Bids will be opened and in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address, date and time indicated in the Bidding Documents.

(Sgd.) JUAN MIGUEL M. LUZ
Undersecretary and Chairperson,
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – September 9 & 16, 2004)

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES

Ang Bangkong May Damdaming-Bayan
1598 M. H. del Pilar St. cor. Dr. J. Quintos St., Malate, Manila
Tel. Nos. 522-00-00; 526-01-00 connecting all departments

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines invites interested suppliers who are (a) duly licensed Filipino citizens/sole proprietorship; or (b) 60% Filipino owned partnerships/corporations; or (c) two or more suppliers forming into joint ventures jointly and severally liable; or (d) cooperatives duly registered with the CDA; with largest single contract, similar to the items for bid, for the last 2 years, at least equal to 50% of the approved budget; and with Net Financial Contracting Capacity (NFCC) at least equal to the approved budget, to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following items:

ITB No.	Item / Description	Approved Budget	Source of Funds
2004-181	6 units MICR Encoder 4 units MICR Reader	P 810,000.00 1,200,000.00	LBP Funds
2004-223	2,000 spls. Ribbon for Epson FX 2180, Original 9,500 spls. Diskette 3.5HD, 10 pcs. per box 2,800 bxs. Envelope Mailing white with window (Legal size) 105mm x 241 mm (4-1/8" x 9-1/2"), 70gsm., 500 pcs./box	1,400,000.00 840,000.00 595,000.00	LBP Funds

Bidding of the above requirements is scheduled on October 6, 2004 at 1:00 p.m. and the Bid Documents may be obtained from the Procurement Division of the General Services Department, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar corner Dr. Quintos Streets, Malate, Manila, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00 each per ITB.

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on September 23, 2004 at the 25th Floor, Conference Room, LANDBANK Plaza, Malate, Manila.

All particulars relative to the Qualification/Eligibility, Bid Bond, Performance Bond, Pre-bid Conference, Bid Evaluation and Award of Contract shall be governed by the provisions of RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

Only those bidders who comply with the Bank's requirements shall be eligible to participate in the bidding.

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to declare the bidding a failure or waive any defect or informality and to accept bids as may be considered most advantageous to the Bank.

COMMITTEE ON BIDS AND AWARDS

(PDI–Sept. 9 & 16, 2004)

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES

Ang Bangkong May Damdaming-Bayan
1598 M. H. del Pilar St. cor. Dr. J. Quintos St., Malate, Manila
Tel. Nos. 522-00-00; 526-01-00 connecting all departments

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines invites interested suppliers who are (a) duly licensed Filipino citizens/sole proprietorship; or (b) 60% Filipino owned partnerships/corporations; or (c) two or more suppliers forming into joint ventures jointly and severally liable; or (d) cooperatives duly registered with the CDA; with largest single contract, similar to the items for bid, for the last 2 years, at least equal to 50% of the approved budget; and with Net Financial Contracting Capacity (NFCC) at least equal to the approved budget, to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following items:

ITB No.	Item / Description	Approved Budget	Source of Funds
2004-197	32 units Document Scanner	P 3,840,000.00	LBP Funds

Bidding of the above requirements is scheduled on September 29, 2004 at 1:00 p.m. and the Bid Documents may be obtained from the Procurement Division of the General Services Department, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar corner Dr. Quintos Streets, Malate, Manila, upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00.

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on September 16, 2004, 10:00 AM at the 25th Floor, Conference Room, LANDBANK Plaza, Malate, Manila.

All particulars relative to the Qualification/Eligibility, Bid Bond, Performance Bond, Pre-bid Conference, Bid Evaluation and Award of Contract shall be governed by the provisions of RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

Only those bidders who comply with the Bank's requirements shall be eligible to participate in the bidding.

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to declare the bidding a failure or waive any defect or informality and to accept bids as may be considered most advantageous to the Bank.

COMMITTEE ON BIDS AND AWARDS

(PDI–Sept. 4 & 9, 2004)

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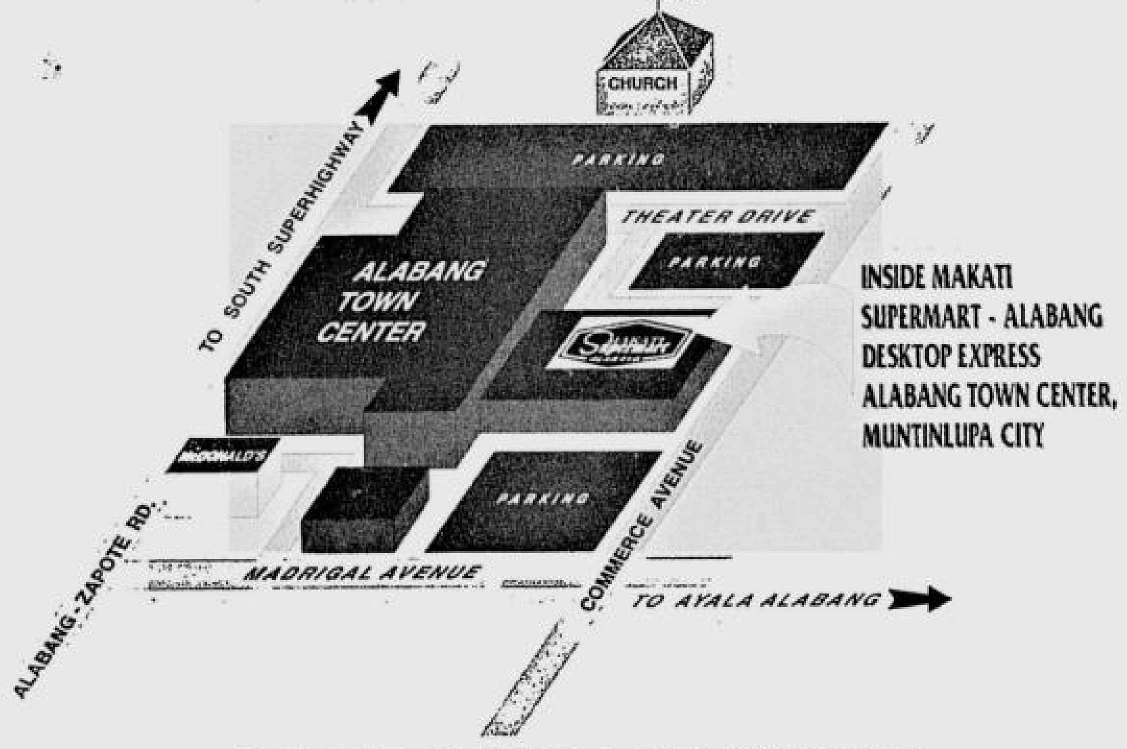

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PDI PARTNERS WITH PMAP CONFAB

The Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI) partners with the Personnel Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP) for the effective public relations and publicity efforts of the association's 41st Annual Conference. Photo shows (seated, from left) PMAP director Bernardette M. Cunanan, PDI senior vice president for marketing Rene Reinoso, PMAP president Oscar L. Contreras, Jr., FPM, and PMAP vice president and annual conference chair Grace Abella-Zata. Looking on are PDI corporate HR manager Rolando Suarez and classified ads division head Jesse Francis N. Rebustillo. The 41st PMAP AC, slated for Sept. 29, 30 and Oct. 1 at the CAP-John Hay Trade and Cultural Center, Loakan Road, Baguio City, is expected to be attended by over 1,000 business owners, people managers, HR practitioners, and students.

The Third Luxury Motor Show at the Power Plant, Rockwell

33rd STREET PRODUCTION will stage its 3rd Luxury Motor Show slated on Sept. 17 to 19 at the Powerplant Mall, Rockwell, Makati. Owing to the overwhelming response to the consecutive two-year event, this event will showcase the latest in the premium marques of luxury and sports cars, auto parts accessories, car entertainment and car security.

This event is presented by MICHELIN ASIA (SINGAPORE) CO. PTE., LTD. in cooperation with Life Shine, Smart Infinity, PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, BPI Edge, Ambi Pur, Infocom, Xenon Bulbs, Concept One, H&R, Atoy Body Kit, Joey 92.3, CIMagazine, Cork & Teak. This is also brought to you by: Auto Extreme, Auto Review, 99.5 RT, 103.5 K-Lite, JAM 88.3, DM 95.5 ■ Automobile Association Philippines

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Our Dearly Beloved

RAMON "TITO" M. MENDOZA, MD

August 21, 1950 – August 25, 2004
of Davao City and Bakersfield, CA

Peacefully joined our Lord on August 25, 2004
at Bakersfield, California

His loving wife **Marilou del Rosario**, stepson **Peter Patrick Alcantara**; father **Atty. Luis B. Mendoza**; mother **Cion Mendoza** (†); parents-in-law **Nanay & Tatay del Rosario**; brothers & sisters **Freddie, Che, Bong, Louie Jr.**, and **Dolly**, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Holy Mass will be offered at 10:00 a.m. at the St. James Church, lower chapel at Ayala Alabang Village on September 10, 2004.

After the Mass his ashes will be interred at the St. James Crypt.

Our Beloved Mother

TRINIDAD FERNANDO NEPOMUCENO

(widow of the late Teodoro J. Nepomuceno)

Died in the Grace of our Lord on September 7, 2004
at the age of 93.

The family is requesting for your prayers
for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels,
Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, September 11, 2004
at San Juan Municipal Cemetery after the 8:30 a.m. Mass
at Arlington.

In loving memory of

Luz Cruz Salonga

beloved Professor of Chemical Engineering
at the University of the Philippines

who passed away in the Grace of the Lord,
on the morning of September 6, 2004
in Los Angeles, California, USA, at the age of 76.

She is survived by her husband Feliciano G. Salonga; her children Lu Anne Salonga, Carlos and Carina Salonga, Marylou and Jim Kennedy; her grandchildren Miguel Carlo, Myca Patricia and Marc Antonio Salonga, Jamie Marie and Justin Paul Kennedy. Her beloved sister Benita C. Menez, nephews and nieces pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the Queen of Heaven Chapel, Rowland Heights, California. Memorial services will be held on September 9, 2004 at St. Denis Catholic Church, Diamond Bar, California and interment on September 11, 2004 at Queen of Heaven Catholic Cemetery.

A light so true and warm
that embraced so many lives
that shared so much of itself that others may grow
that provided a refuge for so many troubled souls
that guided so many seeking sincerity and compassion
that shaped so many minds and emboldened timid hearts
A light that will forever shine
never forgotten
eternally loved

DRA. PETRONILA "LILING" MARQUEZ-SAN LUIS

May 31, 1910 – September 8, 2004
UP Medicine Class 1936
of Makati and Zamboanga City

Peacefully joined her Creator at the age of 94.

Her husband **Judge Candido San Luis** (†)
and her daughter **Eloisa** and **Guillermo Profeta**;
grandchildren **Dennis** and **Jeannie, Jasmin**;
great grandchildren **Nicole, Mathew** and **Marco**.

Her remains lie in state at Don Bosco Chapel,
Makati City.

Cremation will take place in the Crematory
of Loyola Memorial Chapels Inc., Guadalupe
at 4:00 p.m. on September 10, 2004.

JOSE SALAZAR PINEDA

of Caloocan City and Lubao, Pampanga

Died in the Grace of our Lord
on September 04, 2004 at the age of 75.

He is survived by his wife **Rosario**; children **Rodolfo-Lilia, Imelda-Wilfredo, Virgilio-Vicky, Ruben-Siony, Romeo-Annie, Danilo-Cristy, Angelo-Noemi, Carlito-Edna**; grandchildren, brothers and sisters-in-law, special family friends, and other relatives.

The family request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at St. Agustin Parish Chapel, Lubao, Pampanga.

Interment will take place on Saturday, September 11, 2004 at Holy Rosary Memorial Park, San Isidro, Lubao, Pampanga after the 8:30 a.m. Holy Mass at St. Agustin Parish Church, Lubao, Pampanga.

María Sunga Pascual Vda. de Punla

March 20, 1920 – August 28, 2004

Died in the Grace of Our Lord on August 28, 2004
in Louisiana, USA at the age of 84.

Beloved husband **Conrado Pascual**; children **Ronnie & Norma, Joselito & Eva, Digna & Rudy, Lyn & Willy, Mila, Chat & Ken**, and **Vic & Belen**; brothers & sisters, grandchildren & great grandchildren, other relatives & friends request your prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz-Sucat, Parañaque (inside the Manila Memorial compound).

Interment will be on Saturday, September 11, 2004 at 3:00 p.m. after the Mass.

JOAQUINA RIVERA-CRUZ

Aug. 6, 1922-Sept. 7, 2004

Her bereaved sisters **Tomasa R. Viñeza & Felicidad Rivera**, sister in-law **Ines Garcia** together with her nephews & nieces request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

The body lies in state at the family residence at Maasim, San Ildefonso, Bulacan.

Interment will be on Sept. 11 at the San Ildefonso Catholic Cemetery after the 2:00pm Mass.

"I am the resurrection and life. He who believes in Me will live. Even though he dies; and whoever believes in Me will never die." John 11:25-26

LILIA RODRIGUEZ ABERGAS DE JESUS

of Montalban, Rizal, Meycauayan and San Jose del Monte, Bulacan
peacefully joined her Creator on September 7. 2004.

She shall be missed by her dearest husband, **Romeo Apro de Jesus**; children **DJ & Atty. Peegee, Ma. Romelia & Dr. Willie Sevilla, Ma. Imelda** and **Bobby**; grandchildren **Weejay, Wilfredo, Jr.** and **John Dominic**.

They request the pious readers for the eternal repose of her soul. Her remains lie in state at the Imperial Chapel, La Funeraria Paz, 143 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, September 11, 2004 at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque right after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at Imperial Chapel.

RETIRED SUPT. JOAQUIN D. TESORO

Miag-ao, Iloilo
July 13, 1924 - Sept. 6, 2004

The body will lie in state from/at

Tuesday	-	Sept. 7, 5PM Balantang Memorial Cemetery National Shrine Balantang, Jaro, Iloilo City
Friday	-	Sept. 10, 3PM City Div. Supt Office Dept. Ed. Gen. Luna St., Jaro, Iloilo City
Saturday	-	Sept. 11, 9AM Tesoro Residence Tan-agan, Miag-ao, Iloilo
Sunday	-	Sept. 12, 9AM, Tesoro Residence Baybay Sur, Miag-ao, Iloilo

Interment will be on Friday, Sept. 17, 9AM Concelebrated Mass; St. Thomas of Villanova Parish Church, Miag-ao, Iloilo

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"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

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CAGAYAN II ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
Macanaya District, Aparri, Cagayan
Tel. No. (078) 888-2173 • Telefax No. (078) 822-8900
E-mail:cagelco2main@digitelone.com

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID

The Cagayan II Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CAGELCO II) is inviting all interested bidders to pre-qualify and to bid for the following materials and equipment:

1. **WOOD POLES/CONCRETE POLES/STEEL POOLS, WIRES, TRANSFORMERS AND LINE MATERIALS**
2. **TOTAL SOLUTION SOFTWARE**

To be qualified, bidder must have fully complied with the following:

1. Accreditation requirements: (for submission to PBAC Chairman, Mrs. Blandina Y. Madamba)
   a) Company Profile
   b) Business Registration
   c) Business Permit
   d) BIR/VAT Certificate
   e) Latest Income Tax Return (ITR)
   f) List of Clients for a period of 3 years, if applicable
2) Must be able to pay P2,000.00 (for this particular biding only and not refundable) for the bid documents during the pre-bidding conference.

CAGELCO II reserves the right to reject any/or all bid without any reason, waive any formality therein, accept proposal most advantageous to the cooperative and assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify any bidder for expenses or, losses that may be incurred in the preparation of bid nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

Pre-bid conference and bidding schedules shall be informed to all qualified bidders through fax and mails.

Deadline of submission of requirements -September 24, 2004

(Sgd.) GABRIEL A. TORDESILLAS
General Manager

For expansions of lines in the following areas (Item No. 1):

1. 2 locations in the 1st District of Cagayan
2. 5 locations in the 2nd District of Cagayan
3. 10 locations at Lower Apayao

(PDI – September 9 & 16, 2004

Republika ng Pilipinas
Kagawaran ng Pagsasaka
PAMBANSANG PANGASIWAAN NG PAGSASAKA AT PANGINGISDA
(National Agricultural and Fishery Council)
Diliman, Lungsod ng Quezon
Tel. No. 928-87-41 to 65 local 510

Tender No. 27th RP-JFPP/2002/2004

INVITATION TO BID

The National Agricultural and Fishery Council (NAFC) hereby invites sealed bids from Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) registered farmer cooperatives whose members are engaged in rice production for the sale of 10,785 metric tons of Ammonium Sulphate and 8,593 metric tons of Urea Fertilizer both in bags for December 2004 shipments.

Bid documents shall be available for issuance starting September 10-16, 2004 from BAC Secretariat, NAFC upon payment of a non-refundable fee amounting to One Thousand Pesos (P1,000.00).

For purposes of clarification, a pre-bidding conference will be conducted on September 14, 2004, 2:00 p.m. at NAFC, 4th Floor, Luzon Conference Room, Department of Agriculture Bldg., Elliptical Road, Diliman, Quezon City.

Fully completed sealed bids should be submitted not later than 2:00 p.m. on September 16, 2004. Bids received after the scheduled time will not be accepted/entertained and will be returned unopened.

For inquiries, please contact Engr. Alexander S. Daroya at Telephone Nos. 929-82-34 and 920-17-88.

(Sgd.) CARLITO P. FERNANDEZ
Deputy Executive Director

(PDI – September 8 & 9, 2004)

People, Events & Products

E-mail: pr_pep@inquirer.com.ph
aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Celebrate Linggo ng Bulacan 2004 at SM City Marilao

THE PROVINCE of Bulacan is rich in history and heroes. It is the site of the Malolos Congress, one of the events that led to the declaration of the Second Philippine Republic, as well as the birthplace of national heroes like Marcelo H. del Pilar and Gregorio del Pilar.

It also has a vibrant tradition of arts and culture, being the birthplace of legendary artists like Francisco Balagtas, Nicanor Abelardo, Jose Corazon de Jesus and Atang de la Rama. More contemporary Bulakeno artists include prominent painter Malang and songbird Regine Velasquez.

SM City Marilao joins in the celebration of Linggo ng Bulacan 2004, a celebration of arts, history, culture and tradition with exciting activities from Sept. 6 to 18.

Coinciding with the 106th Anniversary of the Malolos Congress, this year's Linggo ng Bulacan theme is "Pagsulong sa Galing at Produktong Bulakenyo, Kaagapay sa Pag-aangat ng Kabuhayang Pilipino."

The celebration began with the opening ceremonies with Bulacan Governor Josie de la Cruz as the special guest last Sept. 6. Mayors from Bulacan's 24 towns, as well as other local officials joined her.

The fiesta spirit comes to the mall with upbeat music from the Malolos Brass Band and the Drum and Lyre Band consisting of 60 students at 10 a.m. from Sept. 6 to 15.

The festivities also celebrated the province's beauty and talent in the pre-pageant of the Lakan at Lakambini ng Bulacan 2004. Organized by the Provincil Tourism Office, this was held at SM City Marilao's Entertainment Plaza yesterday. A lakan and lakambini from each of Bulacan's 24 towns competed in the pre-pageant.

The arts and culture and the youth take center stage with the Lakan Sining ng Bulacan Art Workshop, which will be participated in by high school students from the province. Held in cooperation with the Lakan Sining ng Bulacan and the Department of Education, this will be on Sept. 10 at 1 p.m.

This will be followed by "Larawan: Eksibisyon ng Lakan Sining ng Bulakan", an exhibit of well known Bulacan painters, which will run from Sept. 11 to 30 at the SM City Marilao Entertainment Plaza.

Highlighting the cultural events will be the Singkaban Fiesta sa SM City Marilao, youth oriented festival aimed at broadening their appreciation for Bulacan's heritage and traditions. Hundred of students will be participating in this event scheduled on Sept. 11 from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Bulakenos will then show their stuff in the Dance and Sport Showcase as performed by the San Rafael Dance members on Sept. 13 at 4 p.m. The event is held in cooperation with the Provincial Youth Sports Education, Culture and Arts and the Bulacan State University. Also not to be missed is the Cheer Dance Exhibition on Sept. 18 at 4 p.m.

Capping the celebrations is the Pasiklaban Fireworks Display Exhibition on Sept. 17 at the open parking area. This will be followed by more revelry in a street party with some of the hottest local bands.

BPI, THE SOLE LOCAL BANK ACCREDITED AS 3RD PARTY CUSTODIAN

The Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) has been accredited by the Monetary Board of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) to act as securities custodian pursuant to the provisions of BSP Circular No. 428. The Circular was issued in line with the policy of BSP to promote the protection of investors in order to gain their confidence and encourage their participation in the development of the capital market. The rules and regulations on the accreditation of banks as securities custodian were promulgated to ensure and enhance transparency of securities transactions. As a securities custodian, BPI will safekeep securities which are sold, borrowed, purchased, traded, held under custody, or transacted in the Philippines where at least one of the parties is a bank or non-bank financial intermediary under BSP supervision. BPI is the only local bank to be accredited as independent custodian, and also the first bank which will act as such through its Asset Management and Trust Group (AMTG). BPI-AMTG manages over P130 billion in assets and has been acting as securities custodian for its clients for several decades now. Its experience in this field will certainly place BPI in the forefront of the custodianship business. Photo shows BPI president Xavier Loinaz (center), accepting the Certificate of Accreditation from Alberto Reyes, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor. Also in photo are (from left): BPI senior vice president Adelbert Legasto, BSP Director Corazon Guerrero and BSP Assistant Governor Nestor Espenilla Jr.

CALTEX DELO SPORT TRUCK AND CUSTOM CAR SHOW EXHIBITOR

Metro Manila's much awaited last quarter motoring event, the 2004 Caltex Delo Sport Truck and Custom Car Show will have adhesive and sealant manufacturer, Threebond as one of its major corporate exhibitor. The company will showcase their latest products for the automotive, mechanical, electronic and electrical industries. The show is all set to unfold on Sept. 29 to Oct. 3, at the Megatrade Hall of SM Megamall B, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City. On its 9th year, this year's show promises to be even bigger with the inclusion of hot motorbikes and bicycles into the event for the first time. Photo shows Isabel Malonzo, TSI advertising and promotions head and Jun 'Richard' Shiomi, Threebond chief representative for Manila office, after the contract signing.

Enjoy the good and easy life in The Legacy at Montgomery Place

IN OUR modern world of dwindling resources, many things that used to be commonplace and taken for granted, like clean air and water, can almost be considered luxuries. In our crowded cities, perhaps it could be said that the ultimate luxury would be the luxury of space.

Where urban land has become more and more scarce, most real estate developments have gone the only way that seems still possible, upward. With the proliferation of high-rises and condominium towers, the suburban sprawl and the good and easy life that came with it now seem like a thing of the past. There are few places within the city that still offer that dream house and lot. This is what sets The Legacy apart.

The Legacy at Montgomery Place, the grand master-planned community on E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue in the heart of Quezon City, features single-detached units on individual lots measuring from 153 to 288 square meters. The architecture was inspired by the traditional houses in the American South featuring high-pitched roofs, high ceilings and tall windows that provide natural lighting and ventilation.

With floor areas ranging from 206 to 257 sq. ms. the houses were built following the split-level concept that allows for more space and room for family interaction.

The porch at the main entrance provides privacy as well as a place that is perfect for unwinding at the end of the day. The master bedroom opens to a balcony that provides a refreshing view of the outdoors. There is enough space for pocket gardens, terraces and backyard barbecues as well as laundry and drying areas and a 2 or 3 car garage.

The Legacy also provides its residents various amenities for relaxation and recreation. The Pavilion, a 900 sqm. centerpiece, houses a sprawling courtyard. The open space that is close to nature can be used for tai chi and calisthenics. The tranquility pool, with its dark tiles, is designed for relaxation. The reflective pool is also conducive to meditation. The sitting area has a Zen-like atmosphere, with the soothing sound of waterfalls in the background.

This is the good and easy life that The Legacy at Montgomery Place offers, with Ayala Land Inc. providing the highest standard of property development and management. Amidst the hustle and bustle of the city, finally here is that rare space you can call your very own.

Interested? Call and inquire at 848-5000 or visit www.ayalaland.com.ph or e-mail ayalasales@ayalaland.com.ph. Model units are available for viewing on-site along E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue, Quezon City.

4TH SM BOWLING CUP LAUNCHED

The SM Bowling Cup recently launched its 4th SM Bowling Cup competition at the SM Megamall Bowling Center. This is ongoing at all SM Bowling Centers until May 2005. Now on its fourth year, this prestigious competition promises more bowling fun and action, plus bigger and more exciting prizes. This year's grand prize winner will bring home P150,000 in cash; while the first and second runners up will be entitled to P50,000 and P25,000 respectively. As a bonus, the competition's perfect game winner can drive home a brand new Chevrolet Aveo. Monthly center finals winners, on the other hand, will be entitled to P20,000 for the champion; and P10,000 and P5,000 for the first and second runners up respectively. The 4th SM Bowling Cup is open to all male and female enthusiasts. those who wish to join may call the SM Bowling Center at SM Megamall, 633-7054; SM City North-Edsa, 929-3320; SM City Fairview, 939-5025; and SM City Cebu, 032-232-0292. Shown during the launch are perfect game bowler (from left) Alejandro Uy, Joonee Gatchalian, Toti Kho and Jeremy Chiu. Each received a plaque and 300 free bowling games at all SM City Bowling Centers.

LET US TAKE CARE OF YOU

Once more, Solvang Pharma Inc expressed their unyielding mission, to provide the best alternative medicines to the Filipinos by donating medicines to the Igan Foundation headed by one of the top newsmen in the country, Arnold Clavio. Shown in photo in the recent turnover of medicines are Mario Chan, president and CEO - Solvang Pharma Inc; Eduardo Vazquez, director/co-founder-Igan Foundation; Rey David, Jr. and Arnold Clavio, president and founder - Igan Foundation.

Bits Clips

Healing services

WITH God nothing is impossible. Experience the healing love of Christ through the Eucharist. Everyone is invited to a Eucharistic Celebration and Healing Services on Sept. 10 at the Christ the King Mission Seminary Main Chapel at E. Rodriguez Ave., (formerly España Ext.) Quezon City at 7:30 p.m. with Fr. Teofilo as the priest presider. The Eucharistic Celebration and Healing services is sponsored by the Servants of the Good Shepherd.

Getting into events

FOR people interested in getting into the business of handling events, Businessmaker Academy (BMA) offers a series of seminars that will provide a comprehensive and practical guide to starting and managing your event management business or team: Balloon Arrangement (Sept. 10 or Sept. 24); Digital Photography (Sept. 16); Floral Arrangement (Sept. 17); Creative Wedding Planning (Sept. 18); High-impact events planning and management (Sept. 23). These courses will be held at Tektite Ortigas. For more information, call 687-4445, 687-4645 or 687-3416.

Tin Can, Licauco launch Mobile Inner Awareness

JAIME Licauco, in partnership with Tin Can Mobile Solutions, has launched Inner Awareness on mobile. Inner Awareness, published weekly at Philippine Daily Inquirer every Tuesday, is now just a text away to aficionados of paranormal phenomena and new age perspectives. The service is initially open to all Smart subscribers and will be available to Globe subscribers by November of this year. Mobile Inner Awareness has a subscription feature, wherein users can opt-in to receive daily insights on karma, past lives, psychic powers and paranormal occurrences from Jaime Licauco. The service also features a question-in portion for those who wish to ask questions to Licauco. The strength of this service is that users can type in any keyword or question, send these to the assigned access code, and automatically receive a corresponding response. For more info, please text INNER to 4633. Available for Smart subscribers only. P2.50/text.

'Negosyo sa Pueblo' in Batangas

PUEBLO Niño Development Inc, the developers of Residencias at Pueblo Niño and Pueblo Niño Town Center at Rosario, Batangas, will be organizing a franchise exhibit at the development site in Rosario.

Tagged "Negosyo sa Pueblo," the exhibit, which will be held on Saturday, Sept. 18, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., will give exhibitors a first-hand experience in exploring the market. It will also give exhibitors the chance to promote their businesses to clients. What is makes the exhibition more eye-catching is the fact that exhibitors can participate for free. Exhibitors will be provided with one standard booth and an exhibit area and will be given the opportunity to display and sell their merchandise.

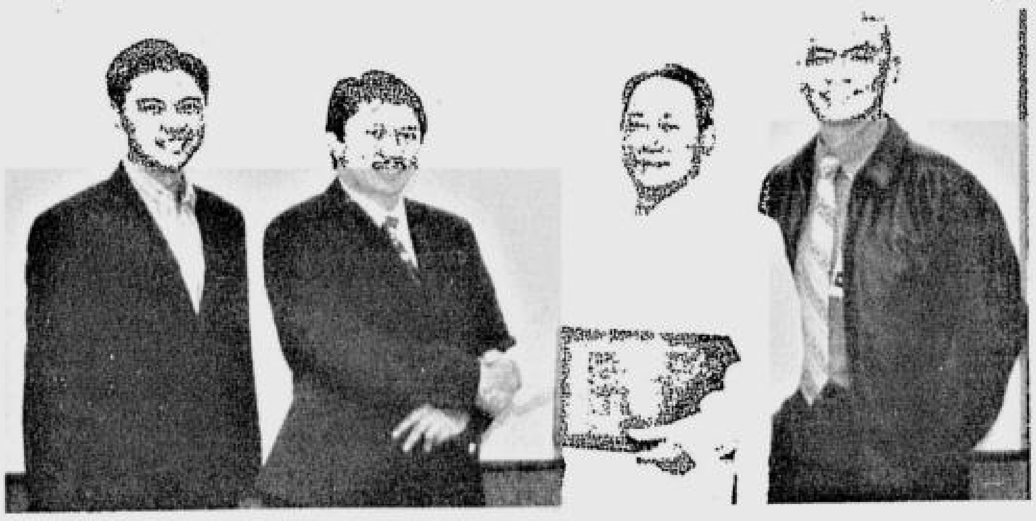
Residencias at Pueblo Niño is situated in Barangay Masaya, Rosario, Batangas. It is located along the national road and is approximately an hour and a half drive away from Alabang. It is just 15 minutes away from Lipa, 20 minutes from Batangas City and a reasonable drive from the South Expressway (Santo Tomas Junction) via the Star tollway. The residential complex will have nature parks, fountains, ponds, water oases. The residential area will have a private gate with 24-hour security and its own water supply. The clubhouse amenities consist of a multi-purpose hall, swimming pool, basketball court, pavilion and a children's playground.

The commercial development called the Pueblo Niño Town Center will include a shopping center, restaurant rows, cinemas, gas station, transport terminal, supermarket and Wet and Dry market.

For more details about "Negosyo sa Pueblo," contact Bianca at 0917-8116335 or Cheryl at 0917-539-2394, through their landline at 822-6191 or email smartconceptsevents@yahoo.com.

CONSULAR CORPS LUNCHEON

Last July 28, the Consular Corps of the Philippines, led by its able Dean Consul General Vince Carlos of the vory Coast, held its regular monthly meeting at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel grand ballroom. As the meeting fell on the exact day of the 183rd Independence Day anniversary of the Republic of Peru, Consul Francis Chua of the Peruvian Honorary Consulate graciously hosted the event. Other celebrants included Canada, USA, Tonga, Venezuela, Mongolia, France, Colombia, Belgium, Egypt, Vanuatu and Morocco. Capping off the hosted lunch was the talk given by well-respected Brahmin of international business Dr. Washington Sycip, who incidentally was a pioneering member of the Consular Corps of the Philippines, as Consul General of Austria. Shown are (from left): Betty Chua; Consul Evie Costa of Togo; Consul Helen Ong of Angola; guest speaker Consul Washington Sycip of Austria; host Consul Francis Chua of Peru and Consul Fortune Ledesma of Monaco.



MICROSOFT, PSIA SIGN AGREEMENT

Microsoft Phils and the Philippines Software Industry Association (PSIA) recently entered into an Industry Linkage Program that provides PSIA member companies with training on various Microsoft development technologies. Present during the formal signing of the agreement were (from left): Mark Yambot, corporate affairs director of Microsoft Philippines; Antonio 'TJ' Javier, managing director of Microsoft Philippines; Gregorio Lainez, president of PSIA and general manager of Radix Systems Services; and Fermin Taruc, PSIA officer and president of Jupiter Systems

BUSINESS

Gov't planning to dissolve 15 GOCCs

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT is considering dissolving 15 government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs), whose functions are deemed unnecessary and whose poor financial performance is aggravating the country's fiscal woes.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said her department and the Department of Finance were in the middle of the evaluation of the 15 state-owned companies that were being considered for dissolution. She, however, declined to name these GOCCs.

BONCODIN

Boncodin said in yesterday's mid-year economic briefing that the evaluation of the GOCCs and the planned dissolution of some of them formed part of the government's streamlining efforts.

The move came after the Senate hit the "mismanagement" of state-owned firms and blamed the huge losses they incur for the country's fiscal woes. The Senate committee on ways and means is set to conduct an investigation of the financial performance of the GOCCs.

The Senate directed the DOF to submit copies of the GOCCs' financial statements and a report on the salaries of their high-ranking officials on suspicion that while the national government had been shouldering the burden of the GOCCs' debts, their officers were enjoying fat salaries.

The ways and means committee, citing data from the finance department, noted that of the P5.3-trillion public sector debt as of 2003, the borrowings of the GOCCs accounted for P2.1 billion. The figure excludes the amount spent by the national government to help financially ailing GOCCs.

Among the GOCCs, the national government's biggest headache is the National Power Corp., whose losses are expected to hit P113-P115 billion by the end of the year. The government has also committed to absorb Napocor's debt amounting to over P500 billion to help the country's ailing power sector attract investments.

The government's streamlining efforts were aimed at reducing expenditures and averting a full-blown fiscal crisis.

The DOF and the DBM have also prepared a draft executive order that will grant vast supervisory power to the finance department over GOCCs, a move aimed at instilling financial discipline on state-owned firms.

If signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo, the executive order will require GOCCs to submit on a quarterly basis their financial statements to the DOF. The proposed EO will also give the finance department the authority to audit the GOCCs whenever deemed necessary.

The DOF is also planning to adopt a scorecard system for GOCCs, based on which the state-owned corporations will be graded. Under such a system, the national government will set performance targets for all the GOCCs. Those that will attain their objectives, such as revenue targets, will be entitled to fiscal incentives, while those that will underperform will be considered for dissolution.

Telcos, broadcast networks, cable operators ordered to pay NTC fees

TELECOM companies, broadcast networks and cable operators were ordered to pay their regulatory fees to the National Telecommunications Commission within the month.

Those who will fail to settle their dues during the given period, according to the NTC, will face fines and sanctions, including suspension and revocation of their licenses to operate.

NTC Deputy Commissioner Jorge Sarmiento warned that the agency would strictly impose the penalties and sanctions on companies that would not comply with the order.

Sarmiento said collection letters had already been sent to companies covered.

The NTC has so far collected P550 million in regulatory fees and it is expecting to collect some P800 million to P900 million more during the month, Sarmiento said.

The commission is also after companies with substantial past due accounts, including Pilipino Telephone Corp. Since Piltel has started posting profits, it no longer has any excuse not to pay its dues, Sarmiento said.

In a memorandum issued to all covered companies, the NTC said a 50-percent penalty would be slapped on fees that would remain unpaid for 60 days after Sept. 30.

The penalty will be increased by one percent for every month thereafter, according to Sarmiento.

"After Sept. 30, the commission will continue collecting late payments of supervisory and regulatory fees, including the required fines," said the deputy commissioner.

"All told, we can collect about P1.2 billion," he added.

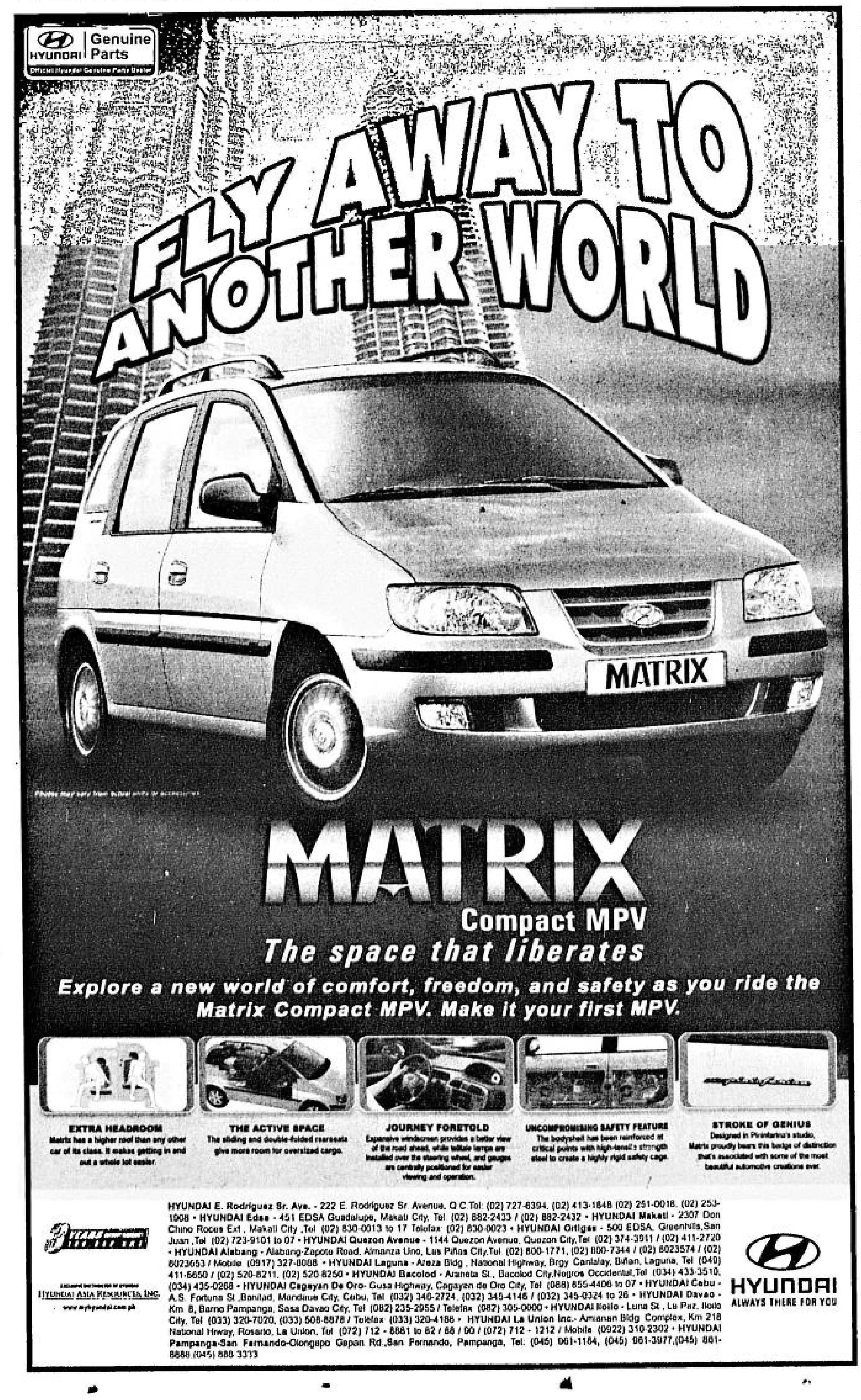
Piltel owes NTC about P1.3 billion in unpaid supervision and regulation fee from 1997 to September 2004.

Phone companies are required to pay the NTC a supervision and regulatory fee of 50 centavos for every P100 of paid capital, a permit fee computed using the same ratio, a spectrum users fee and a radio station license fee.

NTC Chair Ronald Solis said the issue of unpaid fees and conflicting interpretation of NTC regulation governing these fees would be resolved by the commission within the third quarter.

Piltel and sister firm Smart said that the NTC had been double-charging them and that they should even be refunded with more than P600 million. *Clarissa S. Batino*

NEW DEVELOPMENT AT THE GLOBAL CITY
Bases Conversion and Development Authority Chair Rufo Colayco hands out the contract for a 3,800-square-meter property at the Fort Bonifacio Global City to Meridien Development Group Inc. chair Jose E.B. Antonio (middle) and vice chair Ricardo P. Cuerva (left). The lot will be the site of South of Market Condominium.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Sugar production hits 20-yr high of 2.34M MT

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE COUNTRY'S sugar production in the last crop year ending August hit 2.34 million metric tons which, according to the Sugar Regulatory Administration, was the highest recorded in 20 years.

The country regained self-sufficiency in sugar in the previous cropping year covering September 2002 to August 2003 with total production of 2.16 million metric tons.

With the current level of sugar output, the SRA said the industry had started to consider exporting to the world market to stabilize prices.

Prior to the previous cropping season, the country depended on importation to augment local supply which was only 60 percent of the national requirement.

The last cropping year's production was 9 percent higher than the previous year's level, said SRA Administrator James Christopher Ledesma.

Ledesma said the industry had increased the country's domestic sugar reserve from 6 percent to 10 percent of total production to keep the prices steady at a range of P700 to P850 per 50-kilogram bag.

To siphon off excess supply in the local market, the industry plans to sell to the world market some 75,000 metric tons. This despite the low world market prices that range from only P450 to P470 per bag.

"As domestic demand remains at only 1.9 million MT, we must find a way of opening new export markets that can absorb our sugar surplus," he said.

Earlier this year, the sugar industry lobbied hard for the government to buy some 70,000 MT of excess sugar to prevent further decline of the prices, which dropped to as low as P600 per bag.

Millgate prices fell as well because of supply glut, along with the influx of smuggled sugar.

Ledesma said it would be difficult for the government to intervene or bailout the industry because of its budget deficit.

Bangko Sentral projecting $500M in BOP surplus in '05

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES expects a turnaround in its balance of payment (BOP) position next year to a surplus of $500 million, from the revised deficit projection of $505 million this year.

The optimism was based on the bullish outlook on exports and investments during the period.

"The current account will continue to be in a surplus. We're also looking at a recovery in foreign investments, which should help boost the BOP position," Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Deputy Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. told reporters at the sidelines of an economic briefing yesterday.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the economy and the rest of the world. Its major components are the current account and the capital and financial account.

The current account records trading of goods and services, while the capital and financial account covers loan transactions, investment flows and short-term capital.

The country's improved export performance and the continuing global economic recovery have also prompted the BSP to scale down its BOP deficit projection for 2004 to $505 million from $660 million.

Tetangco noted that the current account was expected to post a surplus of $1.48 billion by the end of 2004.

Exports grew by 8.5 percent in the first six months of the year from the year-ago level. He said exports were expected to continue rising due to the increasing demand for electronics and machinery/transport equipment in the world market.

He also said remittances from overseas Filipino workers, particularly in the US and Europe, were expected to post increases.

Imports also continued to grow in view of the expansion in the economy. He said that in the first semester of the year, importation of capital goods rose by 7.2 percent while raw material purchases increased by 2.4 percent.

He also stressed that the services sector was posting lower deficits due to the following:

- Lower net services outflow due to higher receipts from travel and communication;
- Rise in visitor arrivals, particularly from the US, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong;
- Increased operations of call centers resulting in higher net receipts posted by the communications sector.

The BOP posted a deficit of $95 million in the first seven months of the year due to increased servicing of public sector debt.

MOTORING

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Lawmakers find no law vs 'lemon' cars

By Tessa R. Salazar

WHY is a congressman like Way Kurat spending precious minutes of his privilege speech commenting on a squabble between a disgruntled buyer and a car manufacturer?

As we may have seen on national television, this humble representative from Compostela Valley doesn't own a car, much less an SUV, and he may be the only government official who bikes his way to work. Way Kurat Zamora should be the last person to bring up an automotive-related issue in Congress.

5 complainants

During his privilege speech last Thursday, Zamora spoke of a disgruntled media personality of a powerful broadcast network who had become an unhappy former owner of a popular SUV. In the same speech, Way Kurat also mentioned four more complaints on the same SUV brand from four different owners. This spate of complaints prompted Zamora to push for legislative measures on automotive consumer protection.

In taking up the cudgels for these complainants, Zamora might have, inadvertently or otherwise, sent the message across that even nonmotorists could see the necessity of formulating laws governing business transactions between consumers and auto manufacturers, especially when the items traded in question are deemed by their buyers to be "substandard" in workmanship.

The five complainants that Zamora mentioned specified various defects in their units—the vehicle veering to the right resulting in uneven tire wear and unstable ride; "strange" engine sounds, especially when the air-con compressor is on; acid-rain-like stains in the chrome front grille; and cracking sounds when the sidesteps are stepped on.

For now the INQUIRER refrains from naming specific auto brands pending a congressional inquiry (and a court case) determining the complaints' validity.

No lemon law in RP

And for the meantime, legislature has to grapple with a more basic problem: formulating laws dealing with "lemon" vehicles.

What is a "lemon" car? A lemon car is basically a problem car—a vehicle that has an inherent defect that merits a complete replacement of the entire unit altogether. The Philippines, however, has no lemon law to begin with. What we have is the Consumer Protection Act implemented by the Bureau of Trade Relations and Consumer Protection of the Department of Trade and Industry, and this Act deals generally with all types of home appliances and accessories.

In the United States, California's Lemon Law for the protection for new and used car buyers states that if you purchase or lease a car in California and then discover that it has defects that substantially affect its safety, use or value, the state law may help you gain satisfaction from the vehicle's manufacturer. The consumer–action.org states that while the law cannot help everyone with a "lemon" and some people may have to hire a lawyer to get their cases resolved, the law does create important rights for car buyers. The California Lemon Law basically provides consumers how to pursue your lemon law rights as well as basic information on how the law helps people get their cars repaired or replaced under warranty.

"Hopefully, people will have a basis to complain their sad experiences on defective cars," said Kurat. He added that the law would protect both the consumer and the manufacturer because there would be a definition of what a lemon car is.

The salient point of Kurat's speech involves the recurring problem even after a consumer has already brought the problem unit to the manufacturer's attention during the warranty period, with the problem continuing even after the warranty expires.

Personal experience

"This is what the car dealers are refusing (to entertain). If the car still encounters the same problem but the warranty period has ended, (they say) this is no longer covered," said Rep. Mayo Z. Almario of the second district of Davao Oriental, who interpolated Kurat.

Almario told the INQUIRER that he could relate to this problem because of a personal experience with an SUV (of another brand) he bought in 1995. The vehicle's wheels were also misaligned and veered toward the right. After it was suggested that he change tires, the problem persisted. His mechanics in Davao couldn't solve the problem, and so Al-

LAWMAKERS/ C2

A lemon car has an inherent defect that merits a complete replacement of the entire unit

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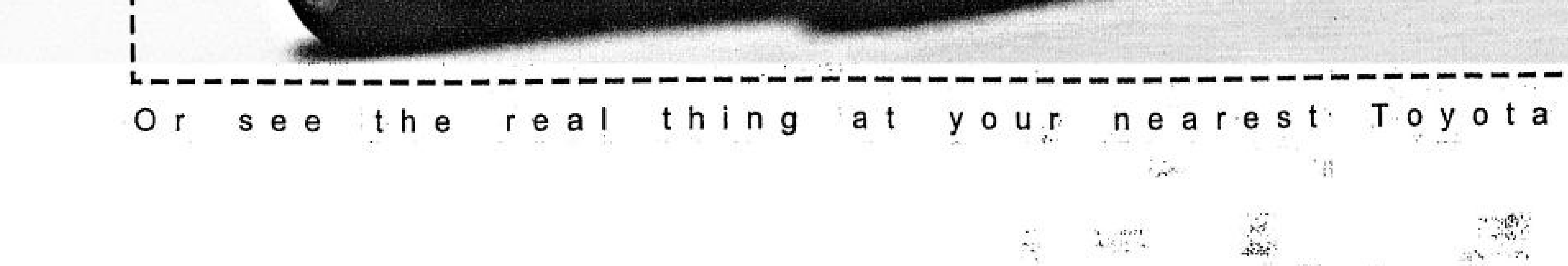

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Vehicle crash test expert is a mom

By Tessa R. Salazar

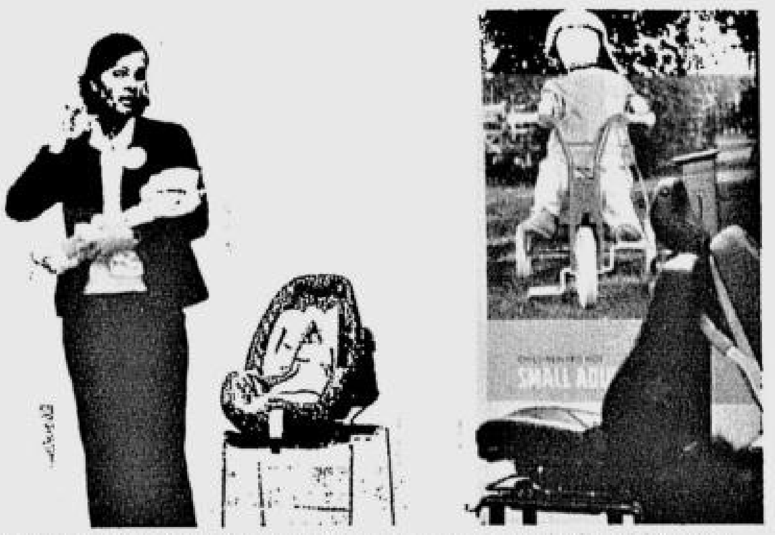
HOW few people know a crash test expert, much less a female one? The only "crash test experts" we know in the country are the NBI, the police and the throngs of "uziseros" explaining their own versions of an accident and oftentimes creating more confusion than clarity.

Soft-spoken Birgitta Trommler, 36, seems like one of those empowered female leads straight from a Hollywood detective movie. But Birgitta is as real as anyone could be. And her job, shall we say, has a real "impact" on the safety and welfare of the motoring public. She is a crash analysis engineer in Gothenburg, Sweden, who specializes in automotive safety for children.

Her expertise and "motherly" aura whenever she talks about the harmony between automotive technology and vehicle safety almost always draws an audience.

Birgitta, who holds a master of science in mechanical engineering at Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, is married and is a mother of two children: Axel, 7, and Ebba, 4.

She is part of a research team developing new safety systems in cars to protect occupants. She said the job is quite tedious and comprehensive, as her team tests prototypes again and again until they are all satisfied with their safety performance. The team also exhausts every possible way that any part of a car would not injure anyone. And when the clientele involves children, the tests become even more stringent.



BEING a mother helped Birgitta learn more practical problems on vehicle safety involving children.

Car crash scenarios

Part of her job involves looking into crashes, whether actual or simulated (She prefers to see them in a simulation, of course). Her team simulates not only possible car crash scenarios but different physiological setups as well. For example, they crash test the hip, knee and legs of a grownup in collisions of varying speeds and angles.

Birgitta's team also takes into consideration the safety of pedestrians, thus they also make it their job to make the front part of the car more pedestrian friendly.

"I didn't study crash testing specifically at the university, but then I tried to get a job at Volvo because I found a lot of interesting things to work on. And I see the things I do in my everyday work being actually used. It's really fantastic and interesting."

Female engineers

Birgitta says in Sweden, where gender equality is a norm rather than the exception, female engineers are more commonly found than in most other countries.

Birgitta estimated that female engineers in Volvo Car Corp. in Sweden comprised about 20 to 30 percent of the engineering workforce.

Vehicle safety about kids

But in her line of work, it would be a big advantage to have children.

She realized this when she had children, as she learned more about practical problems about vehicle safety involving children.

She has never been involved in any car accident in her life, and she hopes to never be in one.

Is ignorance bliss? She doesn't think so. Asked if her job causes her any paranoia, knowing more about vehicular accidents than most average motorists, she said that what she has learned has made her more conscious about safety driving and equipment. She never allows anyone in her car without fastening on their seatbelts and she always makes sure that her children are in child seats.

The more her job creates an impact, the less her clients get injured in one. Ever since she joined the Volvo team, passenger and driver injuries in accidents have decreased 90 percent.

Indeed, without the women engineers in the world such as Birgitta, we are bound to repeat the remark one former macho President warned his political foes: "*Sa kangkungan na lang kayo pupulutin* (Your remains will just be found among the kangkong fields)."

Local automotive parts industry-clustering program proposed

By Charles E. Buban

AN ORGANIZATION of local parts manufacturers recently proposed to the Department of Trade and Industry an automotive parts industry-clustering program that has the potential to increase total exports in transmissions and allied parts alone from the present P11.4 to P15.4 billion by 2006.

The Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturing Association of the Philippines in forwarding the proposal to Trade Secretary Cesar Purisima believes that industry clustering would increase productivity, drive the direction and pace of change, and even stimulate the formation of new businesses.

MVPMAP president Feliciano Torres explained industry clustering as the grouping of firms and allied businesses with interrelated activities.

Industry-clustering would also help the country that only has 256 automotive parts makers compared to competitor countries, which have a huge automotive parts and components industry. For instance, Thailand has 1,700 while Malaysia has 350 automotive parts firms.

Limited to 3 products

In addition, the Philippines' automotive export base is limited to three products only: auto wiring harness, auto transmission and alloy wheels.

It was revealed that of the 256 local parts makers, over 90 percent are classified as small and medium enterprises of which the metals producer account for 47 percent of the total while the rubber accounts for 15 percent.

The leatherettes and trims producer represent 18 percent, the chemical based has 7 percent and allied industries, 13 percent.

Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. senior vice president Serafin Pantaleon believes the clustering program would provide higher value for local products, more focused investment on critical processes and products, as well as better economies of scale and stronger supplier cooperation.

First-tier suppliers

Under the transmission clustering model being proposed, Toyota Auto Parts Philippines Inc., Asian Transmission Corp., Isuzu Autoparts Manufacturing Corp., Honda Parts Manufacturing Corp., together with Laguna Autoparts Manufacturing Corp., will represent the clusters' first-tier suppliers.

Torres cited that the possible composition of second-tier suppliers may include Aichi Forging Co. of Asia, Philippine HKR Inc., Daiwa Seiko Phils. Corp., J.F. Rubber Philippines Inc., Metals Engineering Resource Corp. (Metercor), Arco Metal Products Co. Inc., Ohtsuka Poly-Tech Phils. and Laguna Metts Corp.

The second-tier group, Torres explained will supply the first-tier group while at the same time export directly to other Asean countries.

Third-tier suppliers

The third-tier suppliers, on the other hand, will provide parts to the second-tier group of automotive parts suppliers as well as to the first-tier group.

Notable among the third-tier suppliers are Masuda Philippines Inc., Yutaka Manufacturing Philippines Inc., Yukosha Philippines Inc. and other tool and die makers and service providers.

"The 40 percent increase in total exports value in transmissions alone in this clustering model represent a volume growth from 781,463 units this year to 920,123 units in 2006 and is likely to increase up to 1 million units in 2010 when we cover other export markets outside Asean," revealed Chamber of Automobile Manufacturers of the Philippines president Jose Alvarez.

Given proper government incentives, the automotive parts industry expects the clustering program to also affect manufacturers of allied products such as axles, metal parts, plastic parts, automotive electronics and interiors.

CAR SLALOM CHALLENGE PARTICIPANT
Sacre Bleu Auto Club (with some members shown) was one of the participants to the recently concluded first edition of the Ford-Coliseum Circle Car Slalom Challenge held at the Araneta Coliseum in Quezon City. The event was produced by ULOI Communications and sponsored by Ford Group Philippines, Fruit Works, INQUIRER *Super*, Manila Standard, Popeyes, Red Ribbon, RJ100 FM, Sterling Gifts, Tropical Hut, Tuason Racing, among others.

Soriquez, Agbayani—help! GMA owes one to Ford

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

MY HOMETOWN was not spared by the damage inflicted by the recent typhoon and I must eat pride here if only to appeal for help from Public Works Secretary Florante Soriquez, Pangasinan Gov. Victor Agbayani and Rep. Amado Espino Jr.

Please, dear fellas, use your power and resources to help rebuild roads and bridges destroyed by the typhoon so that our farmers and many other affected families could return to their normal life? I know you are all doing what needs to be done.

Many farm-to-market roads have been eaten by swollen rivers, further making life miserable for our already impoverished countrymen, mostly from the boondocks, who rely on these roads and bridges to transport their produce to the market.

Is help on its way?

* * *

I was not there when it happened. But that is no reason for me not to commend Ford Philippines for its pioneering efforts in making huge business operations within the Asean region.

Occasion was the sending of the first volume of Ford Escapes to Malaysia some days back, making Ford the country's first exporter of completely built-up (CBU) vehicles.

The ceremonial rites held at Ford Laguna had as guest of honor no less than Trade Secretary Cesar Purisima. Purisima's presence is proof of government's recognition of Ford's gigantic leap toward establishing a foothold on the local investment scene. To date, Malaysia became the fourth Asean country to benefit from Ford Philippines' restructured strength to pour in more investment opportunities within the region.

I raise a glass to that.

* * *

Since the launch of the Ford Export Program in 2002, Philippine-made Ford and Mazda vehicles, such as the Ford Escape and Tierra, and Mazda Tribute, have already been successfully exported to Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore. A total of 21,000 units of completely built-up vehicles have been exported to date.

If that isn't confidence in the republic's capacity to sustain economic strength, if not growth, what is?

Hey, GMA ought to applaud herself.

* * *

The expansion of Ford's export initiative comes under the Asean Free Trade Agreement (Afta) program that supports a multilateral policy allowing the trading of vehicles at preferential tariffs within the region. By allowing the rationalization of manufacturing activities, the Afta has enabled Ford to relocate the assembly of models, such as the Lynx and the Escape, to the Philippines.

Needless to say, the expansion of Ford's Export Program has already received accolade, including the award bestowed by Thailand on Ford Lynx as Car of the Year in the Bangkok Motorshow last year.

While Henry Co, president of Ford Group Philippines, was absolutely ecstatic over Lynx's feat, he went to Cloud 9 when the Ford Escape became the best-selling small SUV in the Thailand market two months in a row early this year.

* * *

But Ford is no stranger to awards, nor to global achievements. In July 2003, the Export Program marked its first major milestone when Ford vehicles for export reached the 10,000th unit mark.

Elated no end by that, Ford Motor Co. Chair and CEO Bill Ford announced an additional investment of $50 million in October 2003 to facilitate the expansion of the Ford Philippines plant in Sta. Rosa, Laguna, where the vehicles are assembled at a rate that exceeded expectations.

Total exports for 2004 alone are expected to reach 16,000 vehicles and more than 100,000 vehicle units within the next five years. Thus, with its export program, Ford remains to be the only car manufacturer in the Philippines with a positive trade balance. In 2003 alone, Ford Motor Co. has cumulatively exported $450 million, while imports amounted to only $146 million. Contributing largely to this positive trade balance is the consistent export of finished vehicles assembled at the Sta. Rosa plant.

If only to state the obvious and make GMA stand 10 feet tall, the Ford Export Program has immensely contributed to the creation of jobs in the auto industry, not to mention pumping in millions of dollars in revenue to the country's dollar reserves. To date, the export program has generated $300 million from Philippine-made Ford vehicles.

* * *

For the record, Ford Philippines assembles export units from its sprawling P4-billion, 30,000-square-meter, ISO 9002- and ISO 14001-certified plant in Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

Since we are at it, let's have a bit of history here if you don't mind.

I am one of the lucky motoring journalists who have been to Ford Motor Co., a global automotive industry leader based in Dearborn, Michigan, not too long ago. Mind you, it was not Ford that invited me to fly there but one of its chief rivals—Honda. Ironic, huh?

To the credit of Honda's Arnel Doria, I got the chance to see the Ford Museum in Dearborn. And what a thrill that experience gave me. Among others, I saw the car where John F. Kennedy was in when JFK was killed by an assassin's bullet some 40 years ago. Many other cars with history behind them are also there, like the one ridden by Bonnie and Clyde when they were shot to death.

It is the Ford company in Michigan that manufactures and distributes automobiles in 200 markets across six continents. With more than 328,000 employees worldwide, the company's automotive brands include Aston Martin, Ford, Jaguar, Land Rover, Lincoln, Mazda, Mercury and Volvo. Its automotive-related services include Ford Credit, Quality Care and Hertz. Just last year, Ford Motor Co. celebrated its 100th anniversary on June 16.

Indeed, one can never beat one with a track record such as Ford, whose one distinction I deeply admire is it helped build America's freeways.

* * *

QUOTE ME. Not texting while driving is like buckling up. It's the law.

Lawmakers find no law vs 'lemon' cars

From page C1

mario drove around with a misaligned SUV for the next eight years.

Almario added that the scope of a lemon law should not be limited to cars, but should include brand-new accessories or "casa"-installed accessories.

Product recall

Auto manufacturers, for their part, admit that they sometimes do produce defective items or units, but that a product recall is a "dignified" and proper solution to the problem.

Said Honda Cars Philippines Inc. deputy head for marketing Arnel Doria: "A product recall is not an extraordinary thing. Even the best carmakers in Europe and America recall some of their products. Since products are run by machinery in massive production, it would be impossible to make a 100-percent zero error stock."

Doria stressed, however, that customer handling is also key.

Elizabeth Lee, Truck Manufacturers Association president and vice president of Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc., stressed that though the members of both organizations haven't talked about the lemon law issue, one main question for both organizations has been: "How will this (lemon law) apply to those used vehicles that are being imported (and sold in auctions)?"

"If we're really going to protect consumers, we should follow standards on quality in order to pass global quality measures," she stressed.

Scientific approach

As much as society and various consumer advocates clamor for consumer rights and protection, everyone involved in the automotive industry needs standards to be formulated and implemented by a credible body whose members are technically equipped and technologically knowledgeable about the industry. This has been the sentiment of automotive engineers and other allied professions.

For now, the only existing regulations that the Department of Trade and Industry have are the standards for seatbelts, windshields, tires and emissions. For instance, a car without a seatbelt is considered substandard.

The standard for vehicles created and established by the Bureau of Product Standards, together with consultations from the Department of Transportation and Communications, Board of Investments, and EMB (Environment Management Bureau for safety and environmental aspect) is being implemented by the Bureau of Trade Regulations and Consumer Protection of the DTI. Consumer complaints—car- or noncar-related—are filed at the DTI's BTRCP.

The Consumer Act, or Republic Act 7394, gives the DTI jurisdiction, authority and power to implement the provisions of the Consumer Act. Under that law, the DTI has jurisdiction over manufactured and processed products.

"It will be self serving for the carmaker to be the one to dismiss a consumer's complaint. The bible for complaints is the Bureau of Product Standards and the BTRCP working in tandem," said Chris Capistrano, an automotive engineer brand manager of the automotive department of the BOI.

But then, it seems that this "bible" is missing some detailed but important "gospels."

"For instance, do we have a standard that says the ingress and egress of a vehicle should always be on the right side? So how come there are vehicle doors on the left side (danger zone)? Whose responsibility is that?" Capistrano asked.

He added that the BTRCP should have the basis or standard to determine if a vehicle is a lemon. However, its only basis now is the warranty period.

"In the manufacturing assembly, there is a vehicle history form, a standard operating procedure. This indicates what is wrong with the vehicle, how it was made, how tests were done," he said. "Technically, invalid complaints cannot get away with these."

Need for a standard

"There is a need for the Philippines to set a standard for all the vehicles running on the road. If you go to Edsa now, about 50 percent of the vehicles running are not roadworthy. Creating a standard solves all the problems," he said.

This body should guarantee if the vehicles coming in the country is part of a worldwide recall.

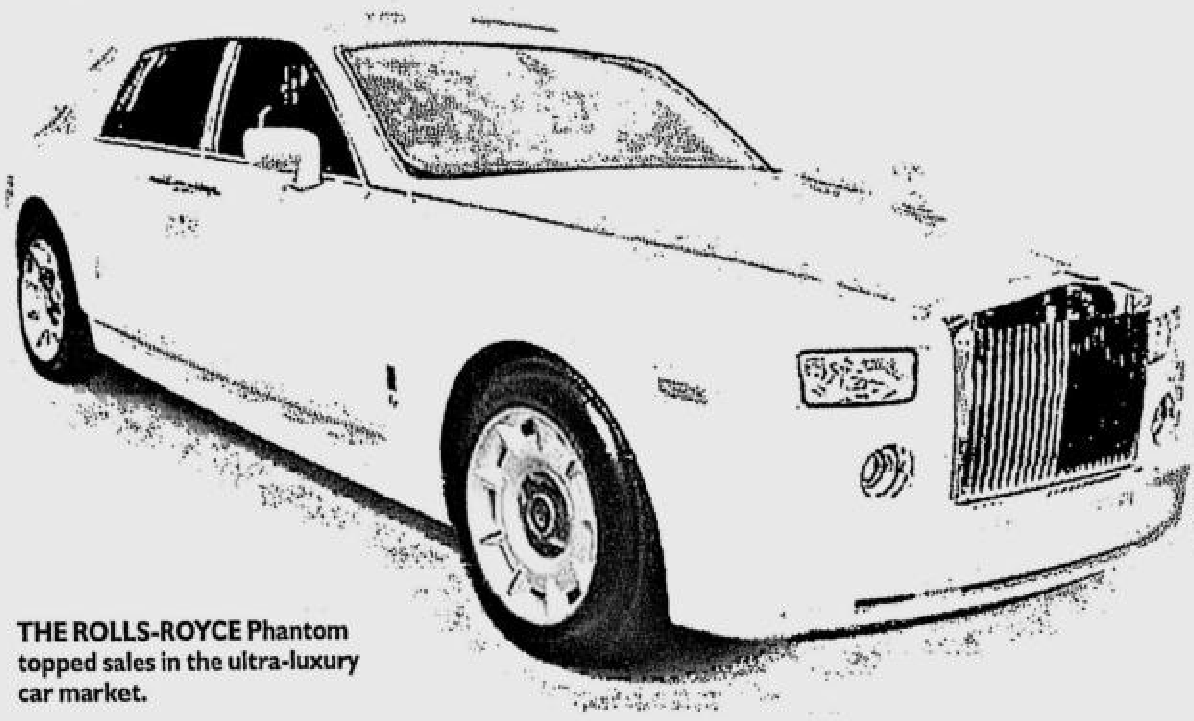
"There must be an independent body like the Society of Automotive Engineers in the United States to look into reasonable complaints only. (An independent body) that does not belong to the government or manufacturing sector," said Joseph Bautista, an automotive engineer who works for an auto manufacturing firm.

He stressed that neither the government nor the manufacturer should investigate.

"Several years ago, there was an attempt to have an SAE in the Philippines comprised of assemblers, academe, government and research institutions but it didn't take off. In case it pushes through in the future, one of its projects should be to investigate lemon cars," said Bautista.

Philippine Automotive Federation Inc. chair Frank Nacua said that a legislation on lemon cars is long overdue, but that this should cover not just brand-new cars but secondhand vehicles and parts and components as well.

"As of now, nobody checks on the road worthiness and safety of these cars."



THE ROLLS-ROYCE Phantom topped sales in the ultra-luxury car market.

AT $357,000, the twin-turbo V-12 Maybach is the dearest 4-door car in the world.

The dearest cars in the world

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

IF YOU think that a Rolls-Royce is the dearest car in the world, you are almost correct. At US$320,000, the 6.7-liter, V-12 Rolls-Royce Phantom is the second most expensive four-door automobile on the planet after the $357,000 twin turbo V-12 Maybach manufactured by the Mercedes division of DaimlerChrysler.

Third in the order of dearness is the $234,260 Aston-Martin V-12 Vanquish, followed by the twin-turbo V8 Bentley Arnage, which has three versions with prices ranging from $208,383 to $265,365. The most powerful Bentley limo variant is the Arnage T, the 2005 model of which was recently unveiled.

J-Lo'S Phantom

The RR Phantom, by the way, is what actor Ben Affleck gifted his fiancée, actress/singer Jennifer Lopez—and got back after they split up. Despite soaring oil prices, these gargantuan gas guzzlers are selling well in the United States, so much so that BMW, the owner of Rolls-Royce Motor Cars, is increasing the Phantom's annual sales target from 400 to 500. But of course, only show-biz superstars and multimillionaire sports stars can afford them.

As of end-April 2004 in the United States, the Phantom topped sales in the ultra-luxury car market, followed by the Aston Martin, the Maybach and the Bentley. But it is not clear whether the Bentley running fourth is the Arnage saloon or the $149,990 12-cylinder Continental GT super coupé.

Super Lexus

With two German carmakers dominating the field (Bentley Motors, originally British, is now owned by Volkswagen) and the US Ford Motor Co.'s Premier Automotive Group competing with the Aston Martin, Japan's Toyota is thinking of joining the fray with a super-luxury Lexus model. Back in Detroit, America's biggest car manufacturer, General Motors, is contemplating a high-end, 16-cylinder Cadillac.

The super sports cars—the Ferraris, Maseratis, Lamborghinis and Porsches—are not mentioned here because they belong in a league all their own.

Faster than Boxster

But did you know that Porsche's entry-level roadster, the Boxster, is not as fast as the Subaru Impreza WRX? Even the 2005 Subaru Legacy is being advertised as faster than the Boxster.

Perhaps the Boxster referred to is the basic 228 bhp 2.7-liter, which requires 6.4 seconds to hit 62 miles per hour from standstill while the 250-hp turbocharged Legacy goes from zero to 60 mph in 5.8 seconds.

Goodbye, Sentra?

Starting next month in Japan, Nissan Motor will begin selling the Tiida Latio to replace the Sunny (known as Sentra here). Nissan, Japan's second largest automaker and an affiliate of Renault, unveiled six new models for the domestic market on Aug. 26.

The Tiida will have a 1.5-liter, 4-cylinder engine developed by Nissan and Renault that, Nissan claims, is 30 percent lighter, has 20 percent better fuel economy and 5 percent to 7 percent more torque than current engines. Whether the Tiida Latio will also eventually replace the Sentra in other Asian markets such as the Philippines is not known, but Nissan announced that it will release a total of nine new models around the world in the year to March 2005.

Gay faves

According to an article I read somewhere, the Audi TT Quattro and new VW Beetle are the favorite cars of gays.

So now, the Audi TT may be regarded as a "pink" car in the same way that Bangkok is reportedly Southeast Asia's favorite "pink tourism" destination.

1.5 VTEC Jazz

In my comparo of the Honda City and the Honda Jazz subcompacts (Aug. 19), a photo of the City's 1.5-liter, 16-valve VTEC engine was published with the caption, "What the Jazz does not have." But in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, the original 1.3-liter i-DSI (intelligent Dual and Sequential Ignition) motor has been replaced with more powerful engines, the 1.5-liter SOHC VTEC and the 1.5-liter i-DSI, both mated to Honda's CVT (continuously variable transmission) system.

Expect the 1.5-liter Jazz to come here soon. Remember that when the all-new City was launched in May 2003, it was only available with a 1.3-liter i-DSI powerplant but in June 2004 Honda Cars Philippines Inc. introduced the 1.5-liter VTEC City.

(With reports from Bloomberg News, The AWSJ and Autocar)

* * *

TODAY'S BUMPER STICKER: History does not repeat itself, historians merely repeat each other.

* * *

E-mail comments to asevilla@inquirer.com.ph.

WHY DON'T YOU?

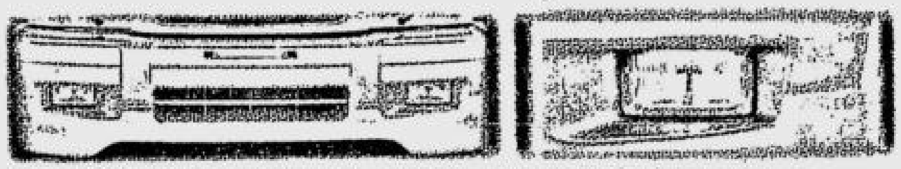
When you experience the fabulous new interior perks of the 2005 Isuzu Trooper, don't you want to chill out inside this luxurious vehicle?

As you marvel on its flashy new exterior extras, don't you want to show-off?

When you realize its fuel efficiency and durability, don't you want to have it for a lifetime?

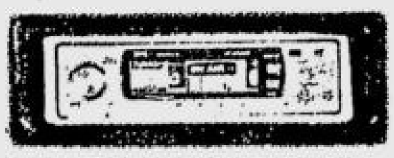
Listen to yourself.

The 2005 Isuzu Trooper. Why don't you?

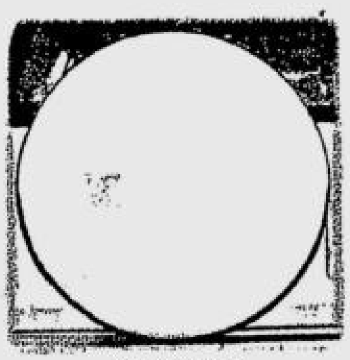


Robust front bumper skirt equipped with fog lamps

Sporty radiator grille



All-new DVD entertainment system



New design spare tire cover

Classy chrome alloy wheel finish

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Travel-weary motorists get new rest stop at SLEX

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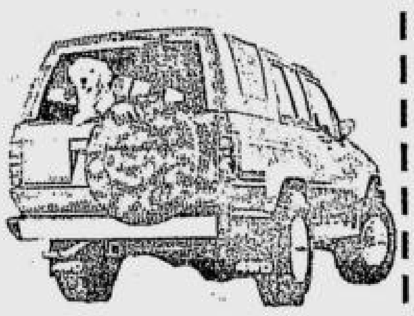

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Text and photos
by Charles E. Buban

MOTORISTS plying the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) will have a new rest stop before proceeding to Metro Manila as Caltex (Philippines) recently opened its newest station located in Barangay San Antonio, San Pedro, Laguna.

The 2.2-hectare Caltex SLEX Superstation 1 is the biggest so far for the company.

"The opening of this retail station is a concrete manifestation of ChevronTexaco's (Caltex's parent company) commitment to cater to its consumers' constantly changing needs, as well as to the Philippines as an investment destination," said Caltex country chair Randy Johnson during the inauguration.

Johnson added that building the SLEX Superstation 1 is also in line with the company's vision to expand its retail network that now stands at 840 nationwide.

ChevronTexaco is the second largest US-based energy company and the fifth largest in the world (based on market capitalization) with more than 50,000 employees in approximately 180 countries around the world.

Under one roof

In addition to Star Mart, Caltex has invited other co-locators namely, McDonald's, Henlin, Starbucks, Cinnabon, Pancake House and Kentucky Fried Chicken and brought them together under one roof.

THE SLEX Superstation I is Caltex's biggest to date.

PROVIDING mall-like ambience, the SLEX Superstation I brought its co-locators under one roof.

The result is a mall-like ambience where motorists need not go too far if they want to dine or do last-minute shopping for supplies.

"By partnering with some of the country's top fast-food chains, Caltex is positioning this superstation as a complete stopover destination here at the SLEX," said Johnson.

Caltex's Xpress Lube

In addition to the various food outlets and convenience store, motorists can also avail of the services of Caltex's Xpress Lube to make sure their cars are in top form.

The Xpress Lube is the latest addition to 61 Xpress Lube bays all over the country.

The Xpress Lube outlet offers oil change packages, maintenance check, engine tune-up and other specialized services like brake fluid testing, transmission servicing, radiator flushing, battery testing and auto detailing.

Manning the Xpress Lube at SLEX Superstation 1 are graduates of the Caltex In-Plant Training (CIPT) program.

Helping disadvantaged kids

Launched in December 2001, the CIPT program was designed to teach and equip disadvantaged children with skills to help them build a good future.

"We are delighted that our Xpress Lube bays have become the training grounds of the CIPT and we are given the honor of lending a hand to youths seeking a better and more empowered future," said Caltex Lubricants reseller support manager Benjie Latorre.

He added that with the addition of the Xpress Lube bay, the SLEX Superstation 1 is now a full-service rest stop providing food, fuel and maintenance for their cars.

Appreciation program

Also during the SLEX Superstation 1 inauguration, Caltex employees, from top managers down, met and interacted with motorists during their refueling stop.

Called the Customer Appreciation Program, one of the activity's objectives is to enable Caltex employees to improve understanding of and better know the customers of their company.

"The program is important in the sense that it reaffirms the need for us to provide a direct line of sight to our customers," explained Caltex general manager for marketing (commercial and industrial) Lito Lopez who witnessed a similar customer appreciation program in Thailand, where it originated.

Employees participating in the program will be assigned by teams to a particular fuel pump station and will be tasked with interacting with customers.

After satisfying the customer's needs, the employee will give a small token of appreciation to the customer, just like what they did during the inauguration.

Rrrrooomm!
The Suzuki Grand Vitara XL7. The biggest compact SUV.
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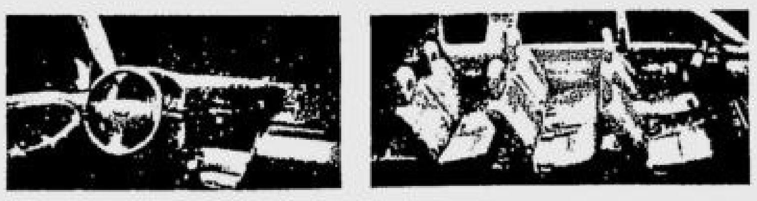

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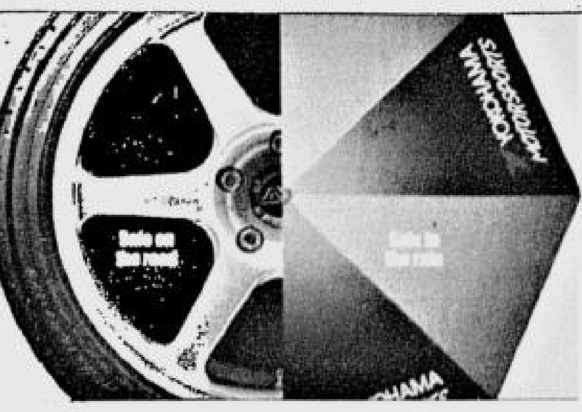

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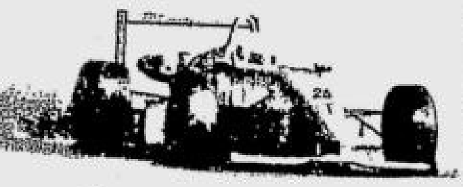

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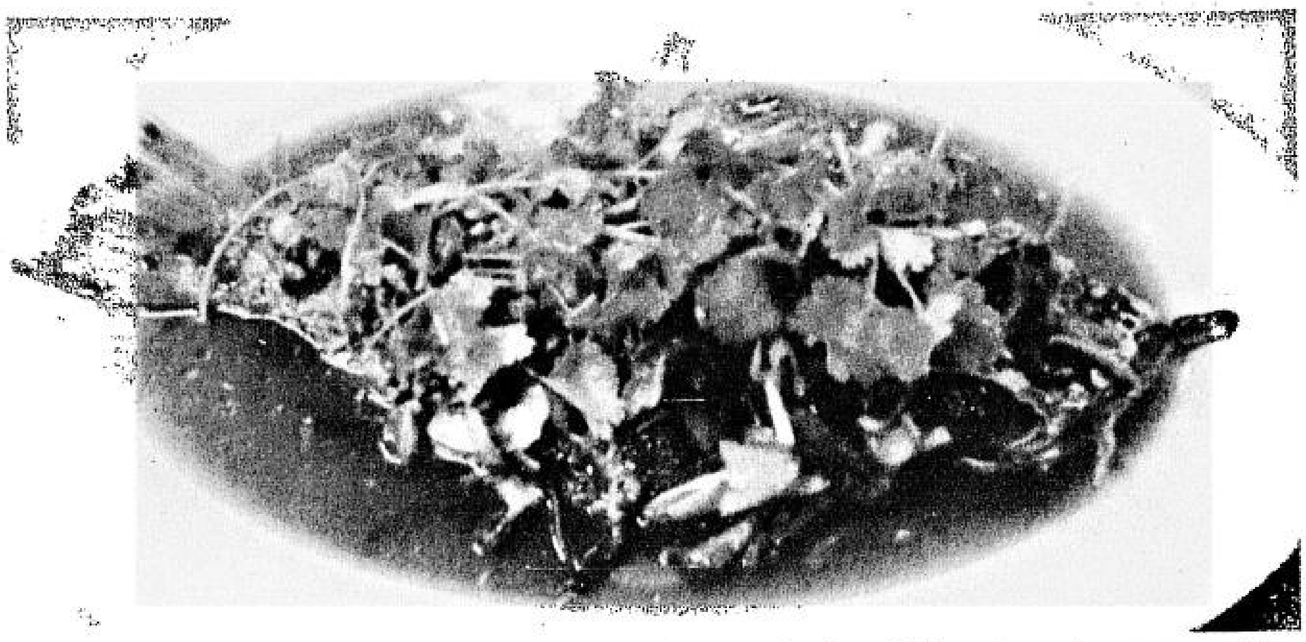
Fresh salads brought to your doorstep



FLOUNDER is a less expensive substitute for *lapu-lapu* and may be steamed and served with mushroom in orange soy sauce.

KITCHEN RESCUE

Reggie Aspiras

IMAGINE this... fresh greens, walnuts, mangoes and *kani* with raspberry vinaigrette or taco fixings over a bed of crisp lettuce. For interesting salad choices at only P90 an order, which is good for two, and delivered right at your doorstep, call Goolai at 6471205.

Lapu-lapu recipe

Can you give me the recipe for steamed *lapu-lapu* in soy sauce?

–TEXT MESSAGE

Next time *naman* say hello to me in your text *ha*, but you said thank you anyway. Here's your *lapu-lapu* recipe and some steaming tips.

- The steamer should be ¾ full of water.
- Water must be on rolling boil for at least seven minutes before steaming.
- Fish is done when eyeballs pop out or, when inserted, the tip of a knife goes through the fish smoothly.
- To add a little twist to this classic, I like adding a cup of fresh sliced shiitake mushrooms or 1/3 cup of orange juice while cooking my sauce. I also steam flounder instead of *lapu-lapu*. I know flounder as *lapad* but others call it *dapa*. But I know *dapa* as sole. Delicate flavor and much cheaper.
- Steam only very fresh fish, swimming if possible. Farmers and Arranque Markets or Gourmet Fresh in Annapolis Greenhills are good sources.
- For a one-stop ingredient shop, call Lolita's in Farmers at 9112567.

Steamed Fish

1.5 kilo whole fresh fish, scaled, gutted and scored (shallow cuts in a diamond pattern on surface of fish)
2 slices of ginger, julienne
4 tbsp *shiao sing* (rice wine)
2 tbsp sesame oil

- Put fish on a plate to fit inside the steamer.
- Top with ginger, sliced leeks, whole spring onions.
- Dribble with shiao sing and sesame oil.
- Steam fish for 20-25 minutes.
- Transfer to a platter, with drippings.

Sauce

½ c green onions, sliced two-inches long
1 c leeks, sliced diagonally
2 slices ginger, julienne
1/3 c light or seafood soy sauce
1-2 tbsp, +/- sugar
3 tbsp *shiao sing*
1 tbsp vegetable oil
2 tbsp sesame oil
white pepper, to taste
½ c water or stock
handful coriander sprigs

- Heat up a wok; add oil.
- Add ginger, soy, sugar, *shiao sing*, stock and pepper.
- Adjust seasoning with pepper and sugar to taste.
- Turn off heat and add leeks, spring onions.
- Top fish with sauce. Garnish with coriander.

From kitchen to laundry

My husband is very particular about stains and creases but allergic to a lot of cleaning agents. I heard there were common kitchen ingredients I could use for laundering.

BETINA

Although I'm a *cucinera* and not a *labandera*, I know quite a few tricks in this department. Remedies from the kitchen generally work wonders and are far safer than commercially available bleaching agents. I've tried lemon but I am not sure if *calamansi* works. Guess it does cause our *Manang* scrubs her whole body with *kalamansi* and she seems bleached enough to me!

Instead of bleach, add ¼-½ cup lemon juice or ¼ cup white vinegar to water for both hand and machine washing.

For socks, undies and T-shirts that no longer look white, add the juice of one whole lemon to a basin of boiling hot water. Soak the items for at least 30 minutes. Wash as usual.

To make jeans softer, add one teaspoon salt to detergent while washing. To help maintain their color, soak for an hour in two tablespoons salt and one gallon cold water. Wash inside out.

For creased collar, cuffs, linen, lace placemats and doilies, mix ¼ cup water and ¾ cup sugar in a small pan. Stir over low heat until clear. Do not bring to a boil. Cool. Soak collar, etc. then squeeze off excess. Straighten out with your hands. Lay flat let dry. Ironing may be optional.

To remove stubborn table cloth stains, use Original Safeguard (Beige). The embroidery and monogram experts Budi and Cristina of Las Bordadoras and Esling the Carpet and Sofa Cleaner swear by it. For red wine stains, rub immediately with white wine.

Food and wine pairing

Much about food depends on personal preference. While there may be rules, at the end of the day, whether red or white with chicken or with fish, you can do as you please.

Generally, one goes from light to dark/white to red wine. This is because meals start light then become progressively heavy in terms of taste as you get to the main course. Don't serve red with delicate appetizers or serve white with strong-flavored dishes like beef, etc.

Here's a brief list of popular red wines and what they go best with:

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ERNEST REYNOSO GALA
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Studied at Chopstick and Hongkong Town Gas Culinary Schools
Leni Reynoso-Araullo
CERTIFIED WILTON METHOD SCHOOL INSTRUCTOR, Chicago, U.S.A.
Masters in Cake Decorating, Wilton School, Chicago, U.S.A., 1974 under Martha & Stanley Wilton
Graduate : Chicago School of Cooking and Catering
Graduate : Full Course, Thai Cooking School at the Oriental Hotel, Bangkok
Studied cooking in Europe, South America & Hongkong
Co-founder, Reynoso Cooking and Baking School, March, 1963
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SEP 9 THU 2:30 - 5:30PM - MONEY MAKING FASTFOOD RECIPES - S&R STYLE HERB ROASTED MAGNOLIA CHICKEN; YUMMY CHICKEN INASAL CHICKEN BURGERS, BAKED POTATO CHIP MAGNOLIA CHICKEN BREASTS W/ PESTO LINGUINNE P980. BY ERNEST
SEP 10 FRI 2:30 - 5:30PM MONEY MAKING CHINESE FASTFOOD RECIPES - WONTON NOODLE SOUP, DELICIOUS MAKI SOUP STIR FRIED LOMI, KUCHAY DUMPLINGS W/ EASY TO MAKE HOMEMADE WRAPPER, PORK CURRY RICE, AUTHENTIC CHINESE STYLE SHRIMP FRIED RICE P980.
SEP 11 SAT 2:30 - 5:30PM - EASY HONGKONG RESTAURANT COURSE: SIZZLING CHINESE STYLE STEAKS WITH MONTEREY BEEF TENDERLOIN, SHRIMP & CRAB CLAWS & BALLS IN NEST WITH SWEET & SOUR SAUCE HONGKONG STYLE ASSORTED VEGETABLE PLATTER, MAGNOLIA STIR FRIED CHICKEN BREAST WITH CASUY, LAPULAPU FILLET IN CREAM OF CORN SAUCE LOURDES FAT CRABS COOKED IN GINGER - GARLIC SPRITE. P980.
SEPT. 12 - SUN - 2:00 - 5:30 PM - NEW MONEY MAKING BACON & SAUSAGE 4. AMERICAN BACON, CANADIAN BACON, CHORIZO DE BILBAO, GERMAN WHITE FISH SAUSAGE, LONGANIZA ILONGA INCLUDES ACTUAL SMOKING METHOD BONUS MORCILLAS (SPANISH BLOOD SAUSAGE) BY LENI R. ARAULLO. P980.
SEPT 15 WED 2:30 - 6:15PM - MULTI LAYERED, FLAKIEST CROISSANTS; PUFF PASTRY MEAT FILLED TURNOVERS, ASSORTED GLAZED DANISH PASTRIES. P1,200. BY MORELLA
SEPT. 16 THURS 2:30 - 6:00PM CHRISTMAS PANG NEGOSYO; 2 VERSIONS OF THE NEWEST CHEWIEST,CHOCO CRINKLES IN MANILA; MANGO MERINGUE TORTE, CLASSIC AMERICAN APPLE PIE; FRENCH STREUSEL APPLE PIE P1,200. BY MORELLA
SEPT. 17 FRI 2:30 - 6:00PM MONEY-MAKING FAST FOOD CART SPECIALTIES BY MORELLA. DELICIOUS CORN DOGS WAFFLE WITH HOMEMADE CHOCOLATE/CARAMEL TOPPING, HOMEMADE CRISPY NACHOS "TOPOTOS" W/ MONTEREY MEAT FILLING & CHEESE DIP, HOMEMADE SHAWARMA WRAP W/ BEEF FILLING & CHEESE DIP P1,200
SEPT 18 SAT 2:30 - 6:00PM - THE LATEST MONEY-MAKING HOTEL & BAKESHOP BESTSELLERS! CHOCO LAVA CAKES(CHOCO CENTERS WILL OOZE OUT); "TARTUFO" (ITALIAN DOME CHOCOLATE COVEREDICE CREAM CAKE W/ CHOCO CAKE BASE CAN BE FROZEN FOR A MONTH OR MORE), CREAM PUFFS W/ BAVARIAN & CHOCO FILLING W/ 2 GLAZES THE YUMMIEST OF NEW YORK RESTAURANT SCHOOL CHEF INSTRUCTRESS LORRIE REYNOSO'S BAKED CHEESECAKE . P1,200. BY MORELLA.
SEPT 19; 26; OCT. 3 & 10 - 4 SUNDAYS 9:00AM - 5:00PM - MASTER COURSE IN CAKE DECORATING FOR BEGINNERS. P4, 500. INCLUDES INGREDIENTS LUNCH & SNACKS (EXCEPT DECORATING MATERIALS LIKE PIPING BAGS, TIPS ETC AVAILABLE FOR SALE AT THE CULINARY STUDIO OR BRING YOUR OWN)
LESSON 1 FLUFFY BUTTER CREAM ICING TECHNIQUES IN COLORING BORDERS SHELL ROPE STAR LEAF ZIGZAG "E" MOTION FLEUR DE LIZ MAKE GARLANDS & SWAGS BASKET WEAVING LATTICE DESIGN 12 DIFFERENT DESIGNS FOR TOP & SIDES OF CAKE DIRECT PIPING OF CAKE OF ROSE BOUQUET SWEET PEA CARNATION
LESSON 2 5 KINDS OF ICING INCLUDING MARSHMALLOW ROYAL TO MAKE SUGAR FLOWERS ON NAILS TOOTHPICKS, FLORAL WIRE, LEARN SUGAR MOLDING CAKES FAN BOOTIES, BASKET CRIB HEART MARY'S HEAD THE LION KING DVD MUSICAL DESIGN CAKE TWO ADULT "SEXY" CAKES EACH STUDENT MUST BRING TRAY/BOX TO TAKE HOME CAKES
LESSON 3 MARZIPAN (FREE HAND) MOLDING & PAINTING OF FRUITS FIGURES & VEGETABLES LEARN THE MARZIPAN ROSE, FIGURE & FRUIT PIPING DECORATE DIFFERENT DESIGNS ON MUFFINS FOR INDIVIDUAL SERVINGS WHICH HOTEL & LUXURY LINERS SERVE
LESSON 4 HOW TO PREPARE DEBUTANTE/WEDDING CAKES; TIERED, STACKED ETC EACH STUDENT WILL DESIGN & DECORATE A WEDDING CAKE (STYRO) TO BRING HOME PLEASE BRING BRING TRAY/BOX BY LENI R. ARAULLO
SEP 20 MON 2:30 - 6:00PM - SOFTEST DOUGHNUTS FOR BUSINESS! NO OVEN NOR SPECIAL EQUIPMENT NEEDED INCLUDES CHOCOLATE & MARBLED DOUGHNUTS W/ SEVERAL FILLINGS ICINGS DIPS PLUS BONUS RECIPES OF THICK SPANISH CHOCOLATE & CHURROS P1,200. BY MORELLA
SEP 21 TUE 2:30 - 6:15PM - LIGHT & AIRY ENSAYMADAS. CHEESEROLLS SPECIAL EGG PANDESAL W/ FILLING CINNAMON ROLLS. BREAD BAKING MADE EASY! P1,200.
SEP 22 WED 2:30 - 5:30PM - MAX'S STYLE FRIED CHICKEN; JOLLIBEE STYLE CHICKEN W/ GRAVY CHICKEN BURGER, DELICIOUS POTATO SALAD SIZZLING GRILLED PORK CHOPS 4 SEASONS PUNCH RIPE MANGO JUICE MELON TAPIOCA W/ SAGO, GREEN MANGO JUICE P1,200.
SEP 23 OR OCT 7 THU 1:00 TO 5:00PM. LIVING WELL 3RD FLOOR, THE PODIUM, ADB AVE., MAND. PLS. CALL MS. AIMEE TO RESERVE 687-4306; 845-1700, OR MS. EMY - 638-9590 - LEARN HOW TO MAKE OUR DELICIOUS BUTTERCAKE MAKE BOILED ICING TO DECORATE ON WILTON'S CHARACTER PANS USING A STAR TIP, A ROUND TIP 3 PIPING BAGS 3 COUPLERS AVAILABLE FOR SALE AT ABOVE STORES OR BRING YOUR OWN P750 INCLUDING INGREDIENTS FULL PARTICIPATION FOR BEGINNERS 14 YRS OLD & ABOVE HOBBYISTS OFW'S IDEAL FOR HOME BUSINESS BY LENI R. ARAULLO.
SEP 24 FRI 2:30 - 6:00PM - 9 MONEY MAKING FOR TEENS & ADULT BEGINNERS; CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES CHOCOLATE CRINKLES BUTTERSCOTCH BROWNIES LENGUA DE GATO, CHEWY MALLOW BARS, RUSSIAN TEA COOKIES VIRGIE PANTALEON'S DATE WALNUT COOKIES SPECIAL POLVORON, LEBANESE DATE BOAT TARTS P1,200. BY ERNEST
SEP 25 SAT 2:30 - 6:15PM - HOW TO DEBONE, STUFF A CHICKEN THE EASY WAY W/OUT SEWING; SANS RIVAL LULU WILLIAMS SPECIAL BAKED MACARONI COMPLETE SALAD BAR W/ DIFFERENT DRESSINGS PLUS MANY BONUS RECIPES P1,200.
SEP 28 TUE 2:30 - 6:00PM - 10 MONEY MAKING CHEWY SQUARES FOR BUSINESS OR GIFTS. WALNUT BAR MANGO BARS LEMON BARS BANANA CHIP BARS, PRUNE BARS RICOA CHOCOLATE CHIP BARS LEMONY NUT BARS DATE NUT SQUARE & CHOCO-MERINGUE BARS P1,200 BY ERNEST.
SEP 29 WED 2:30 - 6:00PM - IDEAL FOR CATERERS & PARTY GIVERS. THE BEST OVEN BAKED PAELLA ROAST STUFFED MAGNOLIA JUMBO CHICKEN PASTEL DE LENGUA CALLOS MADRILENA BLACK FOREST #2 P1,200.
SEP 30 THU 2:00 - 6:00PM - NEW MONEY MAKING SAUSAGE 5. ITALIAN SALAMI PEPPERONI LIVERWURST (GERMAN LIVER SAUSAGE) THAI HOT SAUCE ILOCOS LONGANIZA BONUS FRENCH GARLIC SAUSAGE BY LENI R. ARAULLO (INCLUDES ACTUAL SMOKING METHOD) P1,200.
OCT 2 SAT 2:30 - 6:00PM - 9 SPECIAL BARBECUE; BEEF TERIYAKI IN SKEWERS PORK SPARERIBS W/ HOISIN SAUCE, MAGNOLIA CHICKEN DRUMSTICKS IN HONEY SAUCE (SATE AJAM) CHICKEN SKEWERS IN PEANUT SAUCE BEEF RIBS W/ PEKING NOODLES DELICIOUS PORK SPARERIBS KOREAN BEEF BARBEUE NASI GORENG (INDONESIAN FRIED RICE) FERNANDO MIGUEL ERENETA SCHICKEN HONEY THE BEST PORK BARBECUE W/ SPECIAL PEANUT SAUCE P1,200. BY ERNEST.
OCT 6 WED 2:30 - 6:00PM - POPULAR JAPANESE DISHES 1 - DELICIOUS KAMAMESHI, YAKITORI; (JAPANESE CHICKEN BARBECUE IN SKEWERS). TONKATSU (BREADED PORK CHOPS), GRILLED JAPANESE BEEFSTEAK W/ BELL PEPPER & MONGO SPROUTS MISO SOUP SUNOMONO W/ DILIS, VERY DELICIOUS SUKIYAKI P1,200.
OCT 7 THU 1:00 - 5:00PM WILTON CHARACTER DECOR AT LIVING WELL. PLEASE SEE SEP 23 FOR DETAILS.
OCT 9 SAT 2:00 - 6:00PM - 7 MONEY MAKINGSAUSAGE COURSE 1- GERMAN (BRATWURST); HUNGARIAN KIELBASA MEXICAN L A GREEK SHEBOYGAN BRATS OF WISCONSIN CHORIZO MACAO BAGUIO SAUSAGES BONUS ATCHARA & HOT POTATO SALAD BY LENI R. ARAULLO. P1,200.
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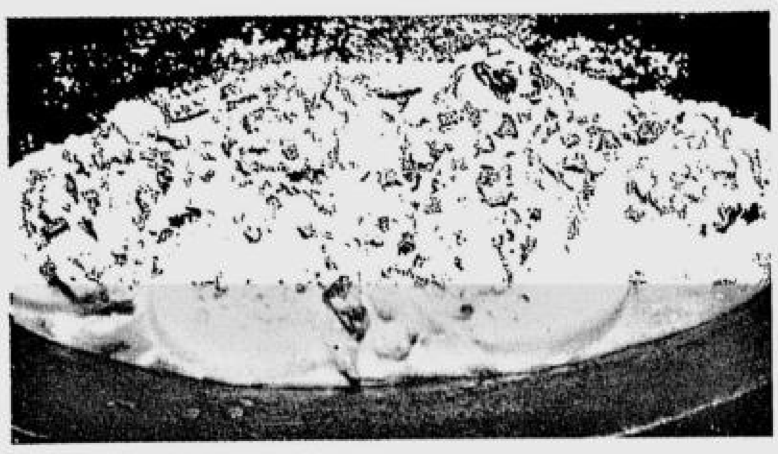
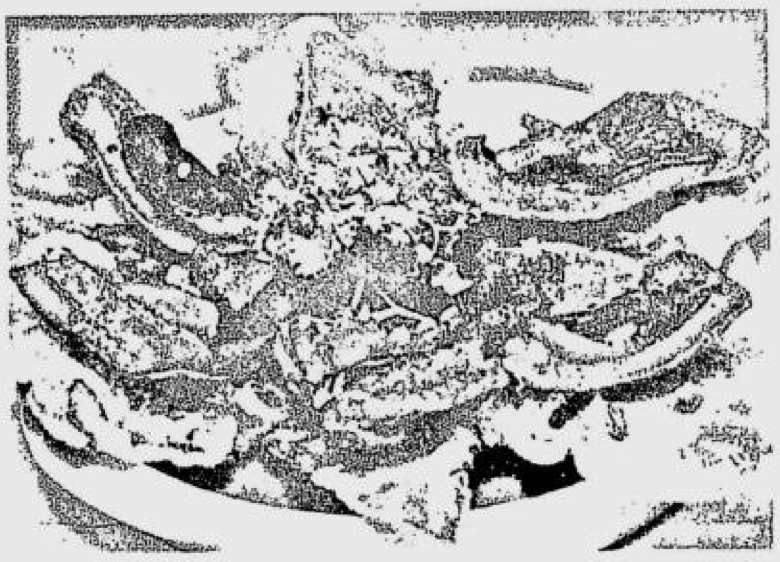
Bangus, the restaurant, has come up with new milkfish recipes to keep foodies interested



TOFU steak with *bangus sisig*

BANGUS salad



BANGUS belly with *sampaloc* candy sauce and crispy *kangkong*

CHICHARONG *bangus* skin

BANGUS salpicao with *camote* fries

The versatile national fish

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Rudy Esperas

NOT only is *bangus* (milkfish) tasty, it's also perhaps the most versatile fish to ever grace the local kitchen.

Just ask Diana Santamaria, one of the owners of Bangus Restaurant in Greenhills, who introduced recently five new and novel ways to serve the fish.

We're not referring to *kare-kare*, *bistek* or *lumpia* made from *bangus*. The dishes, which also came from the Bangus kitchen, are now old hat. Nor has the restaurant dared tinker with such best-selling bangus classics as *sinigang*, *relleno* and *inihaw*.

This time, Santamaria and her team are introducing such creations as *bangus* salad, grilled *bangus* belly with *sampaloc* candy sauce and crispy *kangkong*, garlic mushroom stuffed with *bangus sisig*, *bangus* salpicao with fried *camote*, and tofu steak with *bangus sisig*.

Healthier options

"It's our way of keeping people interested in our restaurant," says Santamaria, "as well as providing them with healthier options."

Bangus salad sits on a bed of lettuce and is garnished with three kinds of native *camote* or sweet potato for added color: yellow, white and violet.

Strips of smoked *bangus (tinapa)*, decidedly the piece de resistance, provide a rather ordinary dish a distinctive flavor. Like most salads, this one is best served cold.

A number of items drew inspirations from foreign dishes. The grilled *bangus* belly with *sampaloc* candy sauce and crispy *kangkong* is Santamaria's version of the Japanese chicken teriyaki, while the garlic mushroom stuffed with *bangus sisig*, which is best savored as *pulutan*, is perhaps her sizzling plate equivalent of the American steak.

Those on the South Beach Diet might want to consider the tofu steak with *bangus sisig*. Not only is it low in calories, the dish is also rich in protein—what with all that tofu—and low in fat. As long as dieters go easy on the fried *camote*, the *bangus* salpicao is also a good choice.

The introduction of new dishes coincided with Bangus' transfer to a bigger, more accessible location along Greenhills' new restaurant row. True to its name, around 30 percent of the restaurant's menu consists of *bangus* dishes. Meat lovers, however, need not despair.

More than just bangus

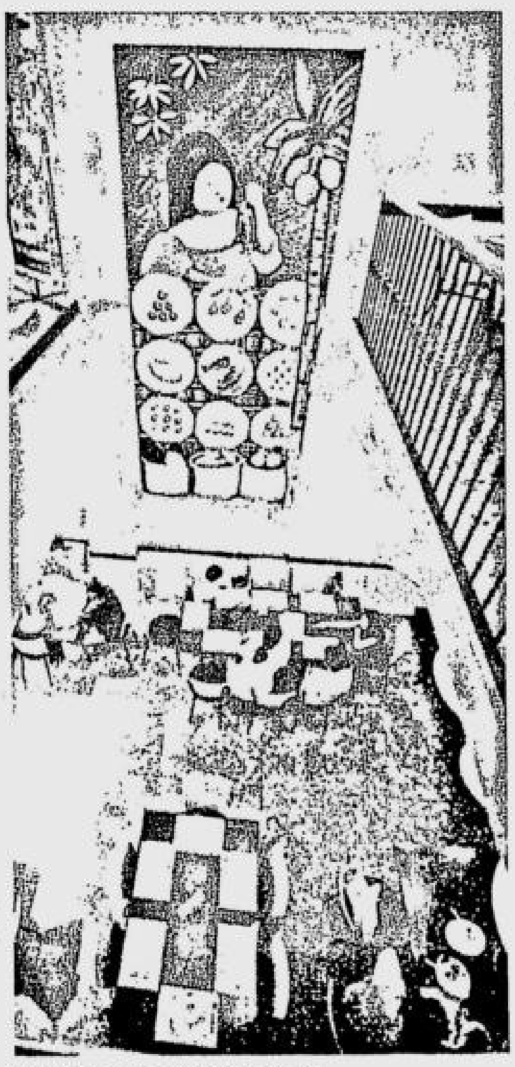
Bangus also offers such all-time Filipino favorites as *crispy adobo*, *bulalo*, *kare-kareng buntot*, crispy *pata*, pork *sisig*, *binagoongang baboy* and other, well, cholesterol-rich fare.

The restaurant has a variety of sizzling specialties, fresh seafood and vegetable dishes.

"Many of our dishes are cooked the traditional way," says Santamaria, who hails from Pampanga. "Diners are assured of the quality and consistency of our *bangus*, as we get them from the best sources in Pangasinan, Pampanga and Iloilo."

Santamaria and her partners first opened for business as one of a dozen franchise holders of Bangus in 1982. While other franchisees closed shop over the years, the one they managed continued to flourish.

By constantly introducing new *bangus* dishes, exclusively available in their Greenhills place, it didn't take long before their branch became the restaurant chain's leader, surpassing even the one ran by the original owners.



WARM and earthy interiors

After nearly two decades as a franchise holder, Santamaria and company bought the rights to the Bangus name three years ago.

With its own central kitchen now in operation, the group is open to franchising. After all, fresh ways of cooking *bangus* are definitely most welcome among Pinoys.

E-mail the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph

Tofu festival extended

DINING OUT

EAST Café at Rustan's has extended its Tofu Festival until Sept. 15. The Crusty Tofu Stuffed with Prawns and Pork is a healthy alternative to open-faced sandwiches. The Silken Tofu Hot Pot with Prawns and Mushroom, Whole Baby Lapu-Lapu Stuffed with Mapo Tofu, Tofu Salmon in Banana Leaves are also offered. For those who want to skip rice and meat, the Tofu Burger, 100-percent pure vegetarian patty, is a filling alternative. Desserts include Tofu Choco-Orange Cake and Tofu New York Cheesecake. East Café is at 2/L, Rustan's Makati. Call 8120233.

LUK Yuen celebrates Moon Cake Festival. The Noodle House now offers its very own delicious moon cakes for dine-in and take-out for P220 (six pieces/box) or dine-in at P40, single serve. Moon cakes are available for the whole month of September. Visit Luk Yuen at any of its outlets at Greenhills Shopping Center; SM Megamall Basement B; in Makati: Glorietta 2, Ayala Center; Cash and Carry near Buendia; Paseo de Magallanes; and Makati Supermart, Alabang Town Center, Alabang.

EDSA Shangri-La's Summer Palace features Mid-Autumn Festival until Sept. 28. Moon cakes filled with lotus seed paste and salted egg yolk in the center, black bean and mixed nuts and pineapple paste are offered. Special discounts are available for purchases of 10 boxes or more. Call 6338888.

SHANGHAI Bistro celebrates the Moon Cake Festival until Sept. 28. Four pieces of moon cake made from white lotus cream and two egg yolks go for P480; four pieces made from red lotus cream with two egg yolks, P450; six pieces made from red lotus cream with one egg yolk, P350. Shanghai Bistro is located at the 3/F of Paseo Center, Makati and Eastwood City Walk 2, QC. Call 8928870 (Makati) and 6877103/ 6871861 (QC).

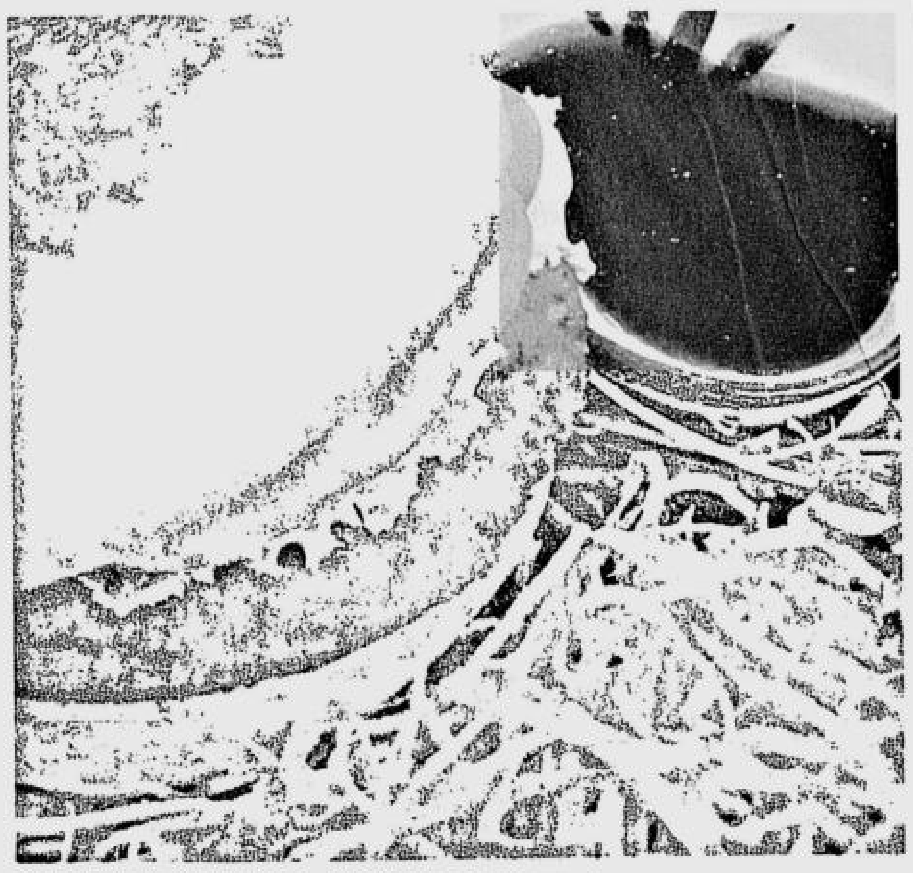
KWANG Tong celebrates its first year anniversary with an ongoing promo. Several choices of full-course meal sets for four or more persons are available everyday, except Sundays and holidays, for only P99 per person. Kwang Tong is located at Glorietta 4, Makati. Call 8140945/ 8140952.

JADE Garden Cantonese Restaurant celebrates its 24th anniversary this month. Its seasoned resident chefs from Hong Kong prepared two special sets of menus dubbed "Two to Party" to launch its anniversary promo. An affiliate of Maxim's Restaurant group-Hong Kong, Jade Garden is open daily for lunch and dinner and is located at Greenbelt 1, Ayala Center, Makati City. Call 8922319/8124548.

SUPER Bowl of China offers a spread of dimsum, noodles, desserts and bottomless iced tea in Eat All You Can for only P120. Available daily, 2-6 p.m. until Sept. 15 at Super Bowl of China branches at Megastrip of SM Megamall; Jupiter St., Bel-Air, Makati; Glorietta 4, Ayala Center; Chefs Avenue, Festival Mall, Alabang; 2/L, SM City North Edsa; Eastwood City Walk 2, Libis; and G/L of SM Fairview. The promo is also available at Big Buddha Restaurant, Greenbelt 3, Makati.

MANILA Pavilion Hotel's Pavilion Court presents the Szechuan Festival until Sept. 26. Dishes include Corn Soup with Minced Fish, Pang Pang Chicken Rolls, Wo Tao Bean Curd, Baked Pork Rack Chili Sweet Sauce, Steamed Chicken and Gluten Szechuan Style, Diced Beef Heong La, Spicy Dumplings and Glutinous Rice Meat Balls. Call 5261212.

BURGOO American Bar is giving away P250 worth of gift certificates to all grandparents who dine at Burgoo on Sept.12. The GCs are courtesy of Chinese Monk. Burgoo has branches at 310 Tomas Morato Extension, South Triangle, Dillman, Quezon City; 2/L Podium, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong City; 3/L Power Plant Mall Rockwell Center, Makati City. Call 927424, 8981815 or 6875254.



EAST Café's Tofu Burger

CHINESE Monk offers a special treat for *lolos* and *lolas* on their special day. All grandparents who dine at Chinese Monk will automatically receive free "Lunch for Singles" gift certificates courtesy of Burgoo American Bar and Restaurant. Chinese Monk is at the Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati City. Call 8974129, 8973785 and 8969429.

THE PENINSULA Manila's Spices Restaurant holds the Indian Thali Food Festival, tomorrow until Oct. 17. A *thali* consists of a small amount of different dishes plus *basmati* rice and *chapati*, chutney and dessert. Call 8872888.

DIMSUM 'n Dumplings introduces Crab and Corn Balls, Salmon Tofu, Crab Sticks and Honey Ham Siomai. These are available at all Dimsum 'n Dumplings restaurant and kiosk outlets. Call 7219695 to 98.

Dealer recalls defective vehicles

THE CONSUMER

Marietta Velasco Giron

IT'S alarming enough that used vehicles from abroad, along with their defects, are being brought in nonstop, but even brand new vehicles have their faulty parts as well.

The defective vehicle of broadcaster Gene Orejana is but one of many cases reported. More recently, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) announced that the local distributor of Kia Rio is recalling 328 units sold in the country between January 2000 to March 2004, to replace their fuel distributor assembly.

DTI explains that this is actually part of the worldwide recall program being done by Kia Motors Corp. (KMC), after analysis found that the vehicles' fuel distributor assembly could crack—and possibly cause fuel leakage—when used over a long period of time.

Although no such case has been reported in the Philippines, DTI says the distributor is recalling the units to "ensure the safety of people and reliability of their vehicles."

Only a few weeks ago, Vic del Fierro of the Coalition for Consumer Protection and Welfare complained that his Kia Rio had been in the repair shop for two months. It couldn't be repaired, he said, no spare part, an exhaust camshaft, was available.

Cell phone theft

By the way, don't think that cellular phone snatching has declined just because there are now 25 million Filipinos (current industry estimate) with cell phones. Del Fierro lost his unit while dining in a Quezon City restaurant.

He recalled, "I was on my way to the restroom, a few steps away from the table, when I remembered that I left my cellular phone beside my plate. I hurried back to get it, but it was already gone. Stolen! As I expected, the waiters said they didn't see anybody take it."

Vehicle recalls

Information on recent and past recalls of vehicles and equipment is published regularly by the Consumer Reports. Unfortunately, it is published abroad and only back issues are available at Book Sale shops. Readers with access to the Internet, however, can find this information on the web site www.ConsumerReports.org.

Here are samples of information provided in the September issue of the publication:

- 321,903 sport utility vehicles (years '01-'03 Ford Escape) with 3.0 liter V6 engines made 1/00 to 9/02. Hazard exists when vehicle is decelerating at speeds below 40 mph. Fuel-air mixture could be too rich, causing the stall. (What to do? Have dealer reprogram powertrain control module)

187,790 cars made 5/00 to 5/04 (years '01-'04 Kia Rio and Rio Cinco). Under certain conditions, fuel intake connection could crack and leak, possibly resulting in fire. (What to do? Have dealer replace fuel distributor and main fuel-tube assemblies.)

Citibank gets award

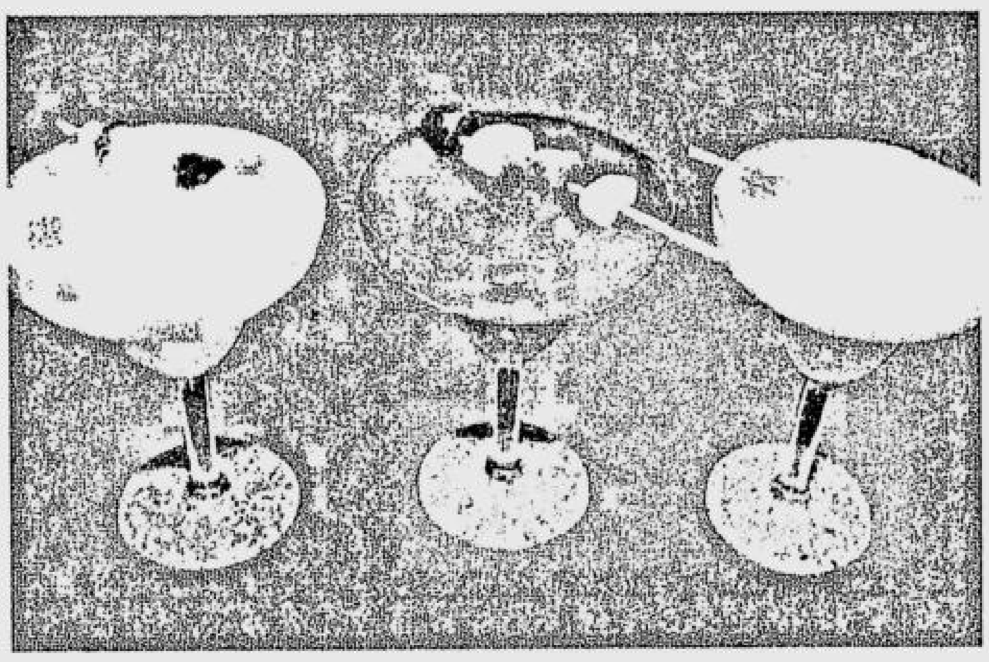
Based on the effectiveness of its online services and product offerings, Citibank was among the winners in the first round of the search for the "World's Best Internet Banks" conducted by Global Finance, an international publication with wide readership.

According to our friends at the Citibank marketing and communications department who sent us the announcement, the search covers banks all over Asia-Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe, North America, Latin America and Middle East/Africa. They add, "Winners in the first round were cited for Best Corporate/Institutional Internet Banks and Best Consumer Internet Bank at country level. The final round will culminate in the selection of winners for the regional and global levels (who will attend the) awards ceremony this October in New York."

Citibank Online is at www.citibank.com.ph.

E-mail the author at giron@mailstation.net

Cocktails for the sweet-toothed



THE MAX Brenner Chocoholics: Haiti, Red Berries and Sweet Cherries Margarita and Java

MAX Brenner, the country's only chocolate bar introduces Aphrodisiac, a wide variety of chocoholic drinks for those with a sweet tooth.

Warm cocktail concoctions include Maragnan, a milk chocolate drink with Irish Cream, espresso and cinnamon; and Colima, a milk chocolate with cognac and hazelnut essence.

Cold beverages include the Chiapas, a white chocolate drink with red berries and crème de cassis; Caibo, milk chocolate with pineapple and coconut milk; Bahia, white chocolate cream with banana punch; Haiti, white chocolate with apples and honey; Java, white chocolate with passion fruit and orange peel; Vera Cruz, white chocolate truffle with mango and yogurt; and Cayenne, milk chocolate truffle with cappuccino and vanilla.

WARM COCKTAILS. Maragnan and Colima

For non-choco drinkers, Max Brenner has a wide assortment of flavored margaritas and vodka cocktails, fused with grapefruit, mint, jasmine, cherries, berries, lychee and others.

Max Brenner is at Greenbelt 3, Ayala Center, Makati. Order an "Aphrodisiac" drink from Monday to Friday between 6-9 p.m. and enjoy a 10 percent discount.

Tips for keeping meat safe

KEEP your family safe from food-borne disease-causing germs by taking extra care when buying food.

To keep meat safe for consumption, for instance, some guidelines have to be observed from buying to cooking.

Monterey offers some basic rules to observe.

In the supermarket, buy nonperishable items first before frozen goods. Immediately store meats in refrigerators or freezers, since food-borne disease-causing microorganisms thrive at room temperature.

Put meats in separate, tightly sealed plastic bags when storing in the freezer or ref to avoid cross-contamination. This will prevent raw meat juices from coming into contact with other meats, leftover dishes, ready-to-eat foods and fresh produce.

Wash your hands thoroughly when preparing, handling and storing meats. Food contact points like cutting boards, knives and countertops should be kept clean and sanitized.

Meats thawed in the refrigerator can be re-frozen before or after cooking, according to experts. But those defrosted by other means should be cooked first before meats are returned to the freezer.

Buy only from trusted sellers. Monterey hogs and cattle, for instance, are Grade A imported breeds subjected to exacting international standards. They produce leaner, higher quality meats, which are handled with much care at every stage—from livestock production to retailing at the Monterey Meatshops.

The company uses a unique, advanced blast-chilling technique right after slaughter to minimize bacterial growth and seal in freshness and nutrients. Monterey meats are checked daily by the National Meat Inspection Commission to ensure they are disease-free.

Monterey meats are available in neighborhood meatshops and leading supermarkets.

'My Way' with Prichon

THE REGGIE Aspiras School of Culinary Arts will conduct the following classes:

Sept. 10 (Friday): Prichon Done My Way - Crisp Fried Lechon de Leche Done My Way, served Peking-duck style with homemade flavored pancakes and 12 sauces.

Sept. 11 (Saturday): Fried Rice and Stir-fried Rice Noodles (all-new)–Fried Rice: salted fish, Thai sausage, *bagoong*, nonya paella, duck. Noodles: Phad Thai, Laksa, Stir-fried Beef, Seafood. Dessert: Sticky Rice with Mangoes

Sept. 13 (Monday): Fancy Salads (all-new)–Pan-fried Foie Gras with Berry Vinaigrette, Foie Gras French Toasts with Fig and Balsamic Rueduction, Oriental Steak Salad with Shiitake, Crispy Noodle Salad with Seafood in Sweet and Sour Dressing, Deep Sea Scallops and Kani with Fruit and Cress, Maple Walnut Chicken, Roasted Pears with Blue Cheese and Portobellos

Sept. 15 (Wednesday): Fresh Pasta Workshop 101 (all-new)–Noodle-making Made Easy: Mushroom Ravioli; Mixed Cheese Ravioli; Canneloni; Lasagna Bolognese; Crab and Prawn Lasagna; Red, Green, Black Pasta with Sauces. (Bring your pasta machine if you own one.)

Classes are held 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Call 9289296/ 9273008/6335162/6474744/ 0917-8399888.

Fresh salads . . .

From page D1

Red

Beef – Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet, Zinfandel

Poultry – Beaujolais;

Red sauce pasta – Beaujolais, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet, Zinfandel

Pork – Beaujolais, Pinot Noir

Chocolate – Merlot, Cabernet, Port

Strong cheeses (blue, feta, brie, havarti etc...) – Cabernet, Beaujolais, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Cabernet, Zinfandel, Port

Next week: White wine and champagne pairing

People want me to come up with a list of where to buy edible Christmas gifts. If you know of anyone who makes delicious and interesting treats, please let me know.

Starting September, due to public clamor (Ha!Ha!Ha!), Kitchen Rescue will be a weekly column.

Text 0917-8399888.

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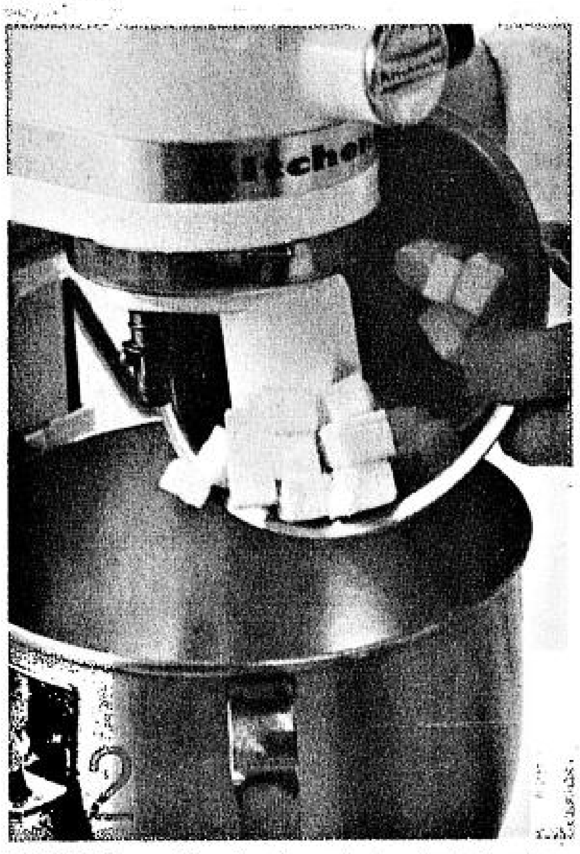


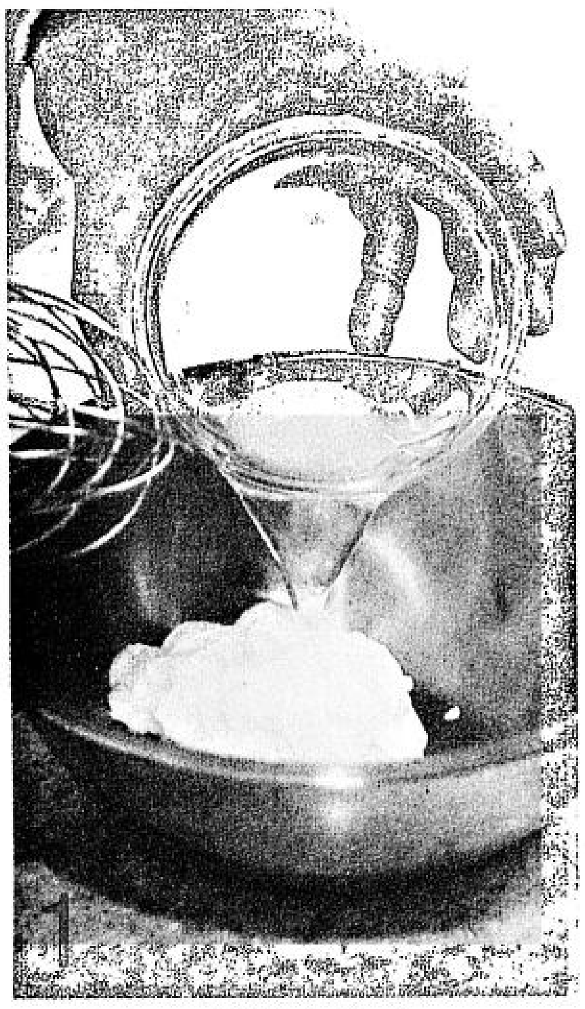
USING the paddle attachment of an electric mixer, mix the butter and dry ingredients in slow speed for two minutes.

ADD the raisins or dried blueberries or walnuts. Continue mixing for one minute.

ADD the egg-and-cream mixture and blend for another one minute.

TRANSFER dough to a lightly floured surface. Use your hands to gently knead the dough until it can be formed into a ball. Cover with plastic and rest for 10 minutes.

Easy and quick homemade scones



PREHEAT oven to 180° C. In a bowl, whisk together egg and cream. Set aside. In another mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, salt and baking powder.

Text by Vangie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Romy Homillada

THERE is something particularly satisfying about homemade breads. For one thing, you are sure they are freshly baked. And freshly baked bread, of course, is great with soups, tea or coffee, or even just butter and jam.

STEP BY STEP

But making your own bread can be time-consuming and exhausting, so here is something tasty that you can do at home in a jiffy. Classic scones, which are of Scottish origin, are "quick bread."

"Scones are easy to whip up if you have friends coming over for tea or coffee. It's great with cream, jam or fresh fruit," says Johnlu Koa.

Scone have been described as smoother than English muffins, heavier than muffins and thicker than flat bread. When baked, scones have some height—though not as much as a biscuit—from rising in the oven, are lightly browned on the outside and cooked all the way through on the inside. When halved, they should be slightly crumbly, tender and almost cake-like or flaky, depending on how they are made.

Scones are traditionally served for afternoon tea in England, but in other countries, they are served any time of the day, but usually for breakfast or snacks.

According to Barron's "Food Lover's Companion," the quick bread is believed to have taken its name from the Stone of Destiny (or Scone), the place where Scottish kings were once crowned.

The original triangular-shaped scone was made with oats and griddle-baked. Today's versions are more often flour-based and baked in the oven. They also come in various shapes—triangle, round, square and diamond.

"Scones are very simple to make using readily available ingredients. You can have a batch of warm scones on the table within half an hour," says Koa, who has been offering scones in all 30 French Baker outlets nationwide.

The main thing to remember in making scones is that the dough needs very light mixing and it should be soft, much softer than pastry. In fact, it is better for the dough to be a little too soft rather than too dry. Also, it is important to bake scones in a pre-heated oven so they can start rising straight away.

"Scones are best served warm from the oven. But they can be reheated for a few minutes, if necessary," adds Koa.

Serve scones warm in a cloth-lined basket with tea, hot chocolate, cider or coffee.

Ingredients

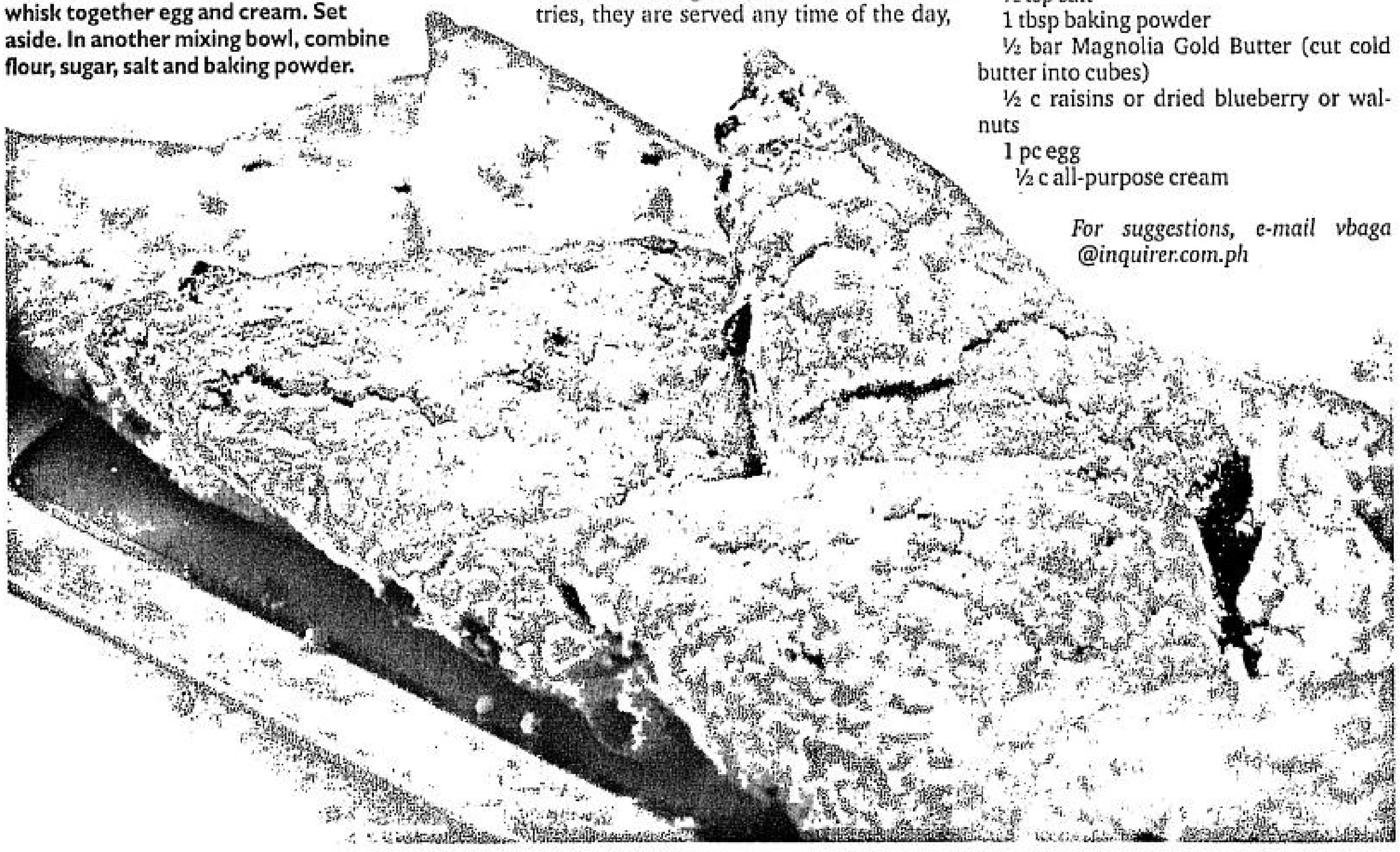
2 c all-purpose flour
1/3 c refined sugar
½ tsp salt
1 tbsp baking powder
½ bar Magnolia Gold Butter (cut cold butter into cubes)
½ c raisins or dried blueberry or walnuts
1 pc egg
½ c all-purpose cream

For suggestions, e-mail vbaga @inquirer.com.ph

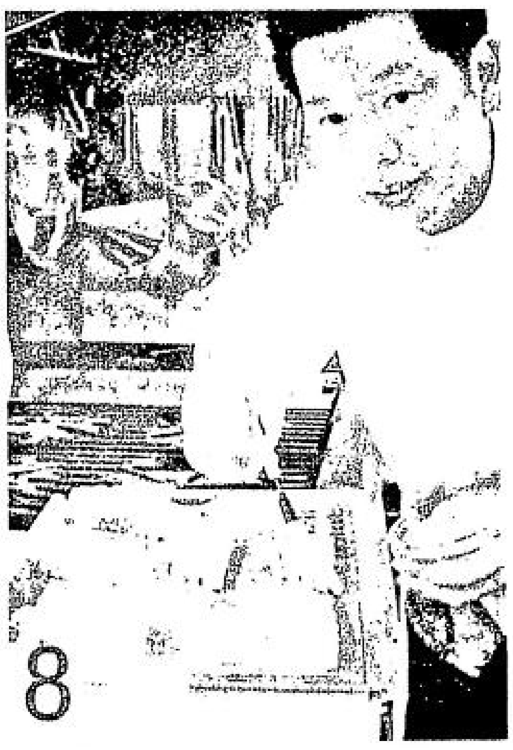
REMOVE plastic cover and roll out dough or pat into an eight-inch round, ¾-inch thick patty, dusting some more flour as needed.

WITH a knife or pizza cutter, cut the dough like a pizza into eight to 12 wedges. Place scones about one inch apart on an ungreased baking sheet.

Said to be of Scottish origin, this is a quickie bread

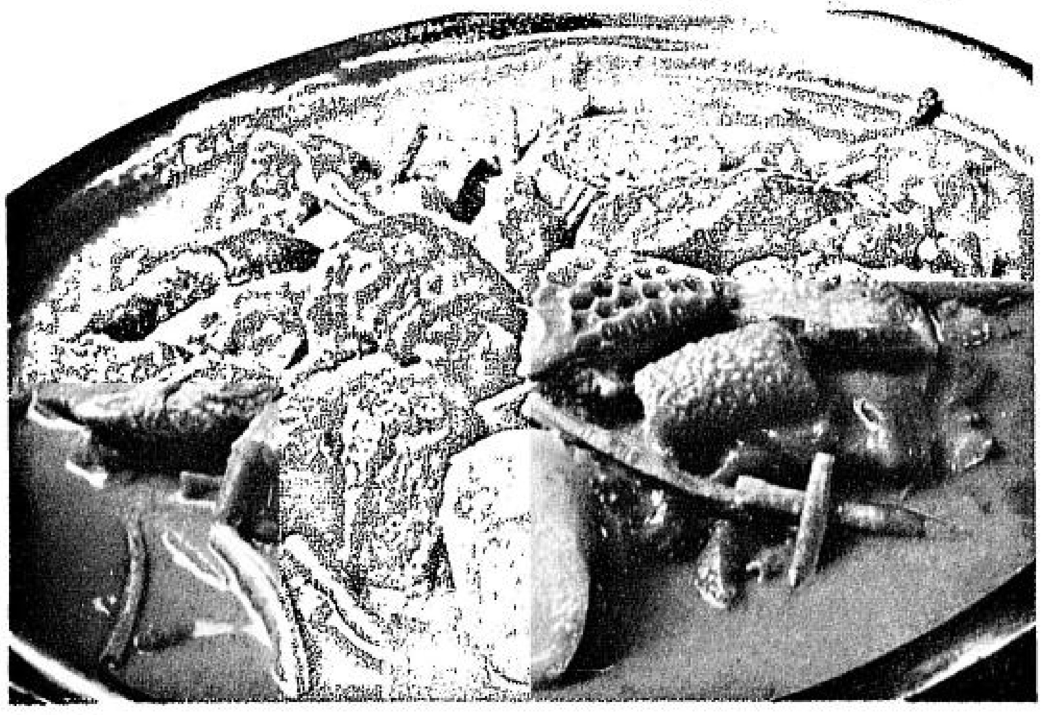


SERVE scones warm with jam and butter, or jam and whipped cream, or cream cheese, or sprinkled with powdered sugar.



LIGHTLY brush scone tops with additional cream and sprinkle with sugar. (For walnut scones, omit sugar). Bake for 12 minutes, until tops are golden brown.

Grand buffet for grandparents



KARE-Kare

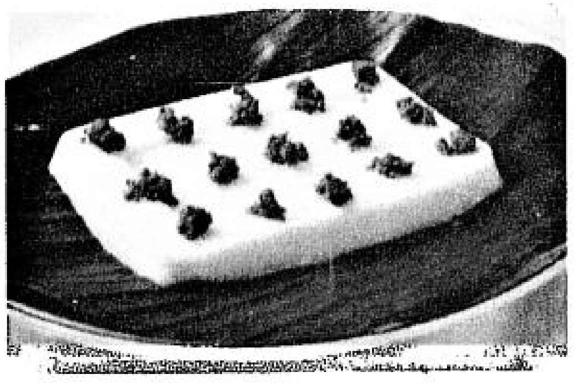
ON SEPT. 12, Grandparents' Day, the eat-all-you-can, eat-all-you-want buffet restaurant Cabalen has a treat for *lolo* or *lola* and their families. Just come to any branch of Cabalen in a group of 10 and get a free buffet meal for a grandparent.

Recognized as the home of hearty Filipino dishes, Cabalen offers a wide array of Filipino favorites, including the real meal starter Bulalo Soup, the filling yet light Dried Radish Salad, mouth-watering Kare-Kare and Bistig Tiyan ng Bangus, juicy and well-marinated Crispy Ulo and a wide selection of desserts and *kakanin*.

The all-day, all-night continuous buffet spread of Cabalen is only P249 for adults and P105 for kids below four feet. These affordable prices make Cabalen the ideal choice for family celebrations.

Cabalen is in West Avenue, QC; SM Megamall; SM Manila; SM North Edsa; Glorietta 3; Robinsons Place Manila; Robinsons Starmills Pampanga; Brickroad, Sta.Lucia; and Harrison Village Square. Cabalen also caters for all occasions. Call 4219220 or 9135522.

INIHAW na Hito with Buro



TIBOK-Tibok